Role Players in Jesus' Life and Salvation History From Creation to end of Time

Foreword: Why This Study?

The Bible is not merely a collection of stories; it is the **grand narrative of God's plan of salvation** for humanity, stretching from the eternal past into the eternal future. In this epic account, numerous figures and entities play key roles, each contributing uniquely to the unfolding of God's sovereign will.

This study is essential because it helps us to:

1. **Understand God's Grand Plan:** By examining the various role players and their interactions, we gain a deeper insight into the complexity and perfection of God's plan to save humanity and establish His Kingdom. It is a tapestry where every thread, no matter how small, serves a purpose.
2. **Find Our Own Place:** By understanding how God has worked in the past and continues to work, we can better grasp our own role as believers in the ongoing history of salvation. We are not merely spectators, but active participants in God's grand narrative.
3. **Navigate Spiritual Warfare:** The study also highlights the role of Satan and his influence, equipping us to better understand and overcome the spiritual battle we experience daily through Christ.
4. **Find Depth in Faith:** A comprehensive understanding of these role players enriches our faith, strengthens our trust in God's faithfulness, and deepens our appreciation for the immense sacrifice Jesus Christ made.

May this journey through the biblical role players give you a new perspective on God's unwavering love, His sovereign power, and the wonder of His plan of salvation.

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Role Players in Jesus' Life and Salvation History: Part I - Creation to Fall

The role of angels in God's plan of salvation extends far back, even before the creation of man. They serve as messengers, servants, and witnesses to God's sovereign will.

God the Father

- **Who:** God the Father is the eternal, almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, and sovereign Creator of heaven and earth (Gen_1:1; Psa_90:2). He is the source of all life and the initiator of the plan of salvation. He is the Head of the Holy Trinity, together with Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit.
    - **Creator:** He created everything that exists, visible and invisible, through His Word (Joh_1:3; Col_1:16).
    - **Sovereign:** He rules over everything and everyone, and His plans cannot be thwarted (Psa_103:19; Isa_46:10).
    - **Loving and Just:** He is perfect in love and justice, and His deeds are always right and true (1Jn_4:8; Deu_32:4).
    - **Covenant God:** He is the God who makes covenants and keeps His promises (Gen_12:1-3; Heb_10:23).
- **Time and Circumstances:** God the Father exists from everlasting to everlasting (Psa_90:2). He is not bound by time or space. His role in creation and salvation history spans all ages, from the beginning of creation to the end of the world.
    - **Before Creation:** He conceived the plan of salvation even before the foundation of the world (Eph_1:4; 1Pe_1:20).
    - **During Creation:** He created the heavens and the earth through His Word (Gen_1:1-31).
    - **After the Fall:** He immediately put a plan of salvation into action (Gen_3:15).
    - **Throughout History:** He guided His people, sent prophets, and unfolded His plan through the ages.
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** God the Father is the source and author of the plan of salvation accomplished through Jesus Christ. His role is fundamental and all-encompassing.
    - **The Initiator of Salvation:** He conceived and put into action the plan of salvation out of His great love for humanity (Joh_3:16; Eph_1:3-6).
    - **The Sender of Jesus:** He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to make the sacrifice for sin (Joh_3:16; Rom_8:3).
    - **The One who Raises Jesus:** He raised Jesus from the dead, which is the final proof of Jesus' victory over sin and death (Rom_6:4; Act_2:24).
    - **The One who Glorifies Jesus:** He glorified Jesus and gave Him the highest place, above every name (Php_2:9-11).
    - **The One who Sends the Holy Spirit:** He sends the Holy Spirit to guide, empower, and sanctify believers (Joh_14:26; Act_2:33).
    - **The Ultimate Judge:** He will pass the final judgment on humanity and Satan (Joh_5:22; Rev_20:11-15).
- **Satan's Influence on God the Father:** Satan has no influence or power over God the Father. God is sovereign and almighty, and Satan is a created being who is ultimately

under God's control. Satan's efforts are always directed against God's will and plan, but God uses even Satan's evil to achieve His own purposes.
    - **Satan's Rebellion:** Satan's original rebellion was an attempt to undermine God's authority and be equal to God (Isa_14:12-15; Eze_28:12-17), but it led to his expulsion from heaven.
    - **God's Sovereign Will:** God's plan of salvation foresaw Satan's evil and provided for it. Satan can only act within the limits God allows (Job_1:12; Luk_22:31).
    - **The Final Victory:** God the Father will ultimately destroy all unrighteousness and cast Satan forever into the lake of fire (Rev_20:10), demonstrating His absolute sovereignty and victory over all evil forces.

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Angels

Angels are heavenly beings who act as God's messengers and servants. They are woven into the entire history of salvation from Genesis to Revelation and are often described in the Bible as beings of light and glory.

- **Created Beings:** Angels are created beings, not God (Col_1:16). They were created by God to serve Him and carry out His will.
- **Spirits:** They are spiritual beings without physical bodies, although they sometimes appear in human form (Heb_1:14; Luk_24:39).
- **Immortal:** Angels do not die (Luk_20:36).
- **Numerous:** The Bible describes them as innumerable, a mighty heavenly host (Heb_12:22; Rev_5:11).
- **Genderless:** Jesus indicated that angels do not marry or are given in marriage, implying they do not have genders (Mat_22:30).

Angels Before the Creation of Man

- **The Heavenly Council and God's Plans:** Before man was created, angels were already present in heaven as part of God's heavenly council. They were witnesses to God's eternal plans, including the plan of salvation that was already in God's heart.
- **The Fall of Lucifer (Satan) and his Angels:** A significant event before the creation of man was the rebellion of Lucifer (now Satan) and a third of the angels against God. This fall established the dynamic of good and evil in the spiritual realm, which would later impact humanity and the necessity of a Saviour.

Hierarchy and Functions of Angels (and how they serve God)

Angels serve God in various capacities and with different levels of authority:

- **Angels of the Lord:** This term often refers to a specific angel who directly represents God and conveys His message or presence in a very personal way (e.g., the Angel of the LORD who appeared to Moses in the burning bush – Exodus 3).

- **Archangels:** These are angels with a higher rank or authority, often leaders among the angels. The Bible specifically mentions Michael (Jud_1:9; Rev_12:7) and Gabriel (Luk_1:19; Luk_1:26; Dan_8:16; Dan_9:21) who fulfil important messages and roles.
- **Angels of Nations:** There are indications in the Bible, especially in the book of Daniel (Dan_10:13; Dan_10:20-21), that there are angels appointed over specific nations or kingdoms who wage spiritual warfare on God's behalf.
- **Cherubim:** These angels are described as guardians of God's holiness and presence. They guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Gen_3:24) and their images were part of the Tabernacle and Temple (Exo_25:18-22; 1Ki_6:23-28). They are also associated with God's throne and glory (Ezekiel 10).
- **Seraphim:** These angels are described in (Isa_6:2-6) as beings with six wings who stand around God's throne, continually worshipping Him and proclaiming His holiness. They also serve as purifiers and messengers.

Characteristics of Angels (and how they serve God)

- **Holy:** Angels are pure and without sin, dedicated to God's will and purpose (Mat_25:31; Rev_14:10).
- **Humble:** They worship God alone and refuse worship from humans, demonstrating their humility and focus on God's glory (Rev_19:10; Rev_22:8-9).
- **Mighty:** Angels possess great strength and power, capable of carrying out God's commands, including miracles and judgments (2Pe_2:11; Psa_103:20).
- **Reverent:** They approach God with deep reverence and respect, continually engaged in worship and praise (Isa_6:2-3; Rev_4:8).
- **Obedient:** Angels are completely obedient to God's commands and carry out His will immediately (Psa_103:20; Heb_1:7).

Angels as Messengers in the Lead-up to Jesus' Birth

Angels also played a significant role as God's direct messengers in the lead-up to Jesus' birth.

- **Angel Gabriel:** Gabriel is the best-known angel in this period.
    - **Message to Zechariah:** He appears to **Zechariah** to announce the birth of John the Baptist (Luk_1:11-20). This announcement was the beginning of the fulfillment of prophecies that preceded the coming of the Messiah.
    - **Message to Mary (The Annunciation):** Six months later, he visits **Mary** with the joyous news that she will conceive the Son of God by the Holy Spirit (Luk_1:26-38). His message, known as the Annunciation, is the central point of the Saviour's coming.
- **Angels to Joseph:** An angel appears in a dream to **Joseph** to reassure him about Mary's pregnancy and instruct him to name Jesus (Mat_1:20-21). This intervention was essential to secure Joseph's role as Jesus' earthly foster father.
- **Angels to the Shepherds:** After Jesus' birth, a multitude of angels appears to the shepherds in the field to announce the "good news of great joy" (Luk_2:9-14). Their praise of God confirms the cosmic importance of Jesus' birth.
- **Time and Circumstances:** Angels have a continuous role in God's plan, but their involvement becomes particularly prominent around the coming of Jesus Christ. They appeared to Zechariah (Luk_1:11-20), Mary (Luk_1:26-38), Joseph (Mat_1:20-24), the shepherds (Luk_2:9-14), and later to Jesus Himself (Mat_4:11; Luk_22:43).

- **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** The angels announced the birth of Jesus, supported His ministry, served Him after temptation, strengthened Him in Gethsemane, proclaimed His resurrection, and accompanied His ascension. They played an integral role in communicating God's plan and executing it.

Fallen Angels and Satan's Influence

- **Satan's Origin:** Satan, originally known as Lucifer ("bearer of light"), was a created angel of high rank and beauty (Eze_28:12-15; Isa_14:12-15). He was perfect in his ways from the day he was created until unrighteousness was found in him.
- **His Former Glory:** The Bible describes him as an anointed cherub, covered with jewels, in the Garden of Eden (possibly a reference to God's holy presence) and on God's holy mountain (Eze_28:13-14).
- **His Rebellion:** Because of his pride and desire to be like God, he rebelled against God. He wanted to raise his throne above the stars of God and be like the Most High (Isa_14:13-14). This rebellion led to his fall from heaven, along with a third of the angels who followed him (Rev_12:4; Rev_12:9).
- **Position after the Rebellion:** After his fall, Satan and his fallen angels (demons) were cast to the earth, where they now act as God's adversaries and the rulers of darkness (Eph_6:12; Joh_12:31). He is the "prince of the power of the air" (Eph_2:2).
- **Satan's Influence in Jesus' Time:** Satan constantly tried to thwart God's plan. He attempted to tempt Jesus (Mat_4:1-11) and undermine His ministry. However, the angels who remained faithful carried out God's will, thereby thwarting Satan's plans.

Satan's Character

- **Adversary:** The name "Satan" means "adversary" or "accuser." He is the primary adversary of God and His people (Zec_3:1; Rev_12:10).
- **Slanderer:** He accuses God's children day and night before God (Rev_12:10).
- **Destroyer:** He comes to steal, kill, and destroy (Joh_10:10).
- **Serpent:** He is described as the ancient serpent, the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world (Rev_12:9; Gen_3:1-5).
- **Tempter:** He tries to tempt people to sin and lead them away from God (1Th_3:5; Mat_4:3).

Satan's Limitations

- **Created Being:** Satan is a created being, not almighty, omnipresent, or omniscient like God (Col_1:16).
- **Under God's Sovereignty:** He can only act within the limits God allows (Job_1:12; Job_2:6).
- **Overcome by Christ:** His power has already been broken by Jesus' death and resurrection (Col_2:15; Heb_2:14).
- **Ultimate Judgment:** He is destined for eternal judgment in the lake of fire (Rev_20:10).

Angels, as God's servants, played a continuous and essential role in the execution of His plan of salvation, from the eternal councils to the announcement of the Messiah's coming.

Role Players in Jesus' Life and Salvation History: Part II - The Patriarchs and other Forerunners

The history of salvation unfolds through the ages, with God choosing specific individuals to advance His plans and prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. This section focuses on key patriarchs and other forerunners whose lives and covenants with God were essential for the lineage and promises of Jesus Christ.

God the Father

The **origin of the plan of salvation** lies with God the Father. Already in Gen_3:15, after the Fall, the first promise of a saviour is made: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." This "seed of the woman" is the first prophecy of Jesus. Throughout the Old Testament, God's plan for salvation is further unfolded through covenant promises.

Key Patriarchs and Forerunners

These figures each played a unique and indispensable role in establishing the foundations for the coming of the Saviour.

- **Adam and Eve (Gen_1:26 to Gen_5:5):**
  - **Who:** The first humans, created in the image of God (Gen_1:27). God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that man became a living being (Gen_2:7). Eve was created from Adam's rib as his helper (Gen_2:21-22). They are the ancestors of all humanity. Adam means "man" or "human" in Hebrew, and Eve means "the living one" in Hebrew.
  - **Time and Circumstances:** They were created by God at the beginning of human history and placed in the Garden of Eden, a perfect environment of communion with God. They received dominion over creation (Gen_1:28). The earth came into being at the very beginning according to God's will (Gen_1:1). Verse 2 tells that the earth was formless and empty before God restored it and created life (light, firmament, dry land, plants, heavenly bodies, sea creatures, birds, land animals, and finally man). This creation took place in six days and concluded with God's declaration that it was "very good" (Gen_1:31). God planted a special garden for Adam and Eve (Gen_2:8). According to traditional biblical calculations, the creation of Adam took place around 4004 BC. Adam lived 930 years according to Genesis 5 verse 5, which means he would have died around 3074 BC.
  - **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** Their disobedience to God by eating from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge (Gen_3:6) brought sin and death into the world. This act, known as the Fall, broke humanity's perfect relationship with God and established the necessity of a Saviour. God, who knows everything and everyone equally well and cannot be surprised, immediately put a plan of salvation into action. His immediate response in Gen_3:15 is the Proto-Evangelium – the first prophecy of the Messiah. God says that the seed of the woman will crush the serpent's head. This is the first indication of a Saviour

who will come from humanity (through a woman) and triumph over the powers of darkness. God's intervention in Gen_3:22 to limit man's access to the Tree of Life was an act of grace to prevent man from living forever in a state of sin. Through the promise of Christ, God assures man that there is an outcome and an answer to eternal rest in Him. Furthermore, God, in His love and care, did not send man away naked, but clothed them with protection (garments of skins) (Gen_3:21). This act of God's provision and covering is an early sign of His grace and His plan to restore and preserve man within His sovereign will.

- **Satan's Influence:** Satan's direct temptation in the Garden of Eden (Gen_3:1-6), in the form of a serpent, led to the Fall and man's alienation from God. His goal was to destroy God's plan for humanity and draw man into disobedience. This act of disobedience, which is the root of all sin, profoundly affected man's life and relationship with God. However, Satan's attempt to destroy man was used by God's sovereign wisdom to establish the need for a Saviour, which would lead to His ultimate victory over Satan. After the Fall, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden (Gen_3:23-24). Satan's influence continued through the sinful nature that took root in humanity. Cain's sinful nature (for which God warned him in time in Gen_4:6-7) was used by Satan to destroy what is beautiful – life and the purity of worship – when he killed his brother Abel (Gen_4:8). This image of destruction through jealousy and disobedience will reappear throughout the history of the Messianic lineage, such as in the relationship between Isaac and Ishmael, and Jacob and Esau, where Satan's attempts to sow discord and destruction repeatedly try to thwart God's plans.

- **Noah (Gen_6:1 to Gen_9:29):**
  - **Who:** Noah was a righteous man and the fifth person in Adam's genealogy (Gen_5:28-29; Gen_6:8-9), who found favour in the eyes of the LORD. Noah means "rest," "relief," or "comfort" in Hebrew.
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Noah lived at a time when humanity filled the earth and spread to all its corners (Gen_6:1). Despite God's good creation, humanity, due to their inherent sinful nature, began to forget that they needed God and were dependent on Him. The wickedness of man on the earth became so great, and every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen_6:5). Sin became so severe that it cried out to heaven, as it were, and God was deeply grieved by what He saw (Gen_6:6). Just as He intervened in paradise, God decided to intervene again by purifying creation and making a new beginning. He sent His Spirit to strive with man (Gen_6:3) and warned the inhabitants of the earth, just as He had warned Cain. This again indicates that God feels sorry for man and wants to give him a fair chance. God then appeared to Noah and shared with him His plan to destroy humanity from the earth by a worldwide flood (Gen_6:13-21). God patiently waited for 120 years while Noah built the ark (Gen_6:3; 1Pe_3:20), a period during which He still wanted humanity to repent and align with His plan of salvation. On the final day, God shut Noah and his family in the ark (Gen_7:16) and saved them through the flood. They landed safely on the mountains of Ararat (Gen_8:4). Mountains in the Bible often symbolise places of Divine encounter, revelation, and new beginnings (e.g., Sinai, Zion), making Noah's landing on Ararat a fitting place for the start of a new era. The rainbow God gave after the flood (Gen_9:12-17) is a sign of His covenant

never again to destroy the earth in that way. Noah was born around 2948 BC. The flood occurred in 2348 BC. Noah lived 950 years and died in 1998 BC.

- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Through his obedience to God's command to build an ark, Noah preserved the human lineage from which the Messiah would come. He served as a "preacher of righteousness" (2Pe_2:5) and by faith condemned the world (Heb_11:7). After the flood, God made a covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen_9:9-17), which includes the promise that the earth would never again be destroyed by a flood. This covenant underscores God's faithfulness and His continued plan for humanity, culminating in the coming of Christ.
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence was clearly visible in the widespread corruption and wickedness of humanity before the Flood (Gen_6:11-12). His goal was to so corrupt humanity that God's plan for a Saviour through a righteous lineage would become impossible. The "sons of God" who married the "daughters of men" (Gen_6:1-4) can also be seen as an attempt to corrupt the human lineage. Despite this widespread evil, God preserved Noah, thereby thwarting Satan's attempt to wipe out the Messianic line.

- **Abraham (Gen_12:1-20; Gen_15:1-21; Gen_22:1-24):**
  - **Who:** Abraham was the patriarch of the nation of Israel, a man of faith and the ninth person in Adam's genealogy (Gen_5:28-29; Gen_11:10-26). The Bible calls him "the father... of all who believe" (Rom_4:11) and refers to him as God's friend (2Ch_20:7; Isa_41:8; Jas_2:23). He is also mentioned in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus as the one into whose bosom Lazarus was brought for comfort (Luk_16:19-31). Abraham was an ordinary person like us; he faced many of the same problems as we do, which makes his faith and obedience all the more remarkable. His deep concern and love for his fellow man are evident in his persistent intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen_18:22-33), where he, as a human, tried to save the city from God's judgment. Abram's name was later changed by God to Abraham, meaning "father of many nations" (Gen_17:5).
  - **Time and Circumstances:** He lived in Ur of the Chaldeans and was called by God to be used as a chosen person, through whom God wanted to build an exclusive people for Himself. This calling ushered in a new phase in God's plan of salvation, where a specific lineage would be set apart for the coming of the Messiah. Abraham was born around 1996 BC. He died in 1821 BC, having lived 175 years.
  - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** God made a covenant with Abraham, which began the Messianic line and promised a universal blessing. In Gen_12:3 and Gen_22:18, God promises: "in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." This "offspring" (or seed) is directly linked to Jesus in the New Testament (Gal_3:16) as the One through whom blessing comes to the whole world. Mary and Joseph's lineage is also traced directly back to Abraham (Mat_1:1-17; Luk_3:23-38).
  - **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence was indirect, through various attempts to thwart God's covenant promises and the Messianic line. This includes the famine that forced Abraham to Egypt (Genesis 12), the two times Abraham presented Sarah as his sister (Genesis 12, 20), and the general temptations that tested his faith. These events had the potential to disrupt God's plan, but God's faithfulness ensured that His promises would continue. Abraham's action of giving Lot the choice and separating was a wise step to handle the situation

and allow God's plan for him to proceed unhindered, even when Lot's presence became a practical and potential spiritual hindrance. As with Cain and Abel, Satan also tried to sow discord and destruction between Isaac and Ishmael, children of Abraham, to threaten the purity of the promised Messianic line (Gen_21:9-10; Gal_4:29). Sarah's laughter of doubt about God's promise of a son in her old age (Gen_18:13) can be seen as a human weakness that Satan could have exploited to sow unbelief and try to thwart God's plan.

- **Sarah:**
  - **Who:** Sarah was an extremely important female figure in the Bible, known as the wife of Abraham and the mother of Isaac, the child of promise. Sarah was known for her beauty, even at an advanced age, and attracted the attention of kings like Pharaoh and Abimelech (Genesis 12:11-20; 20:2-7). Sarah means "princess" or "woman of high rank" in Hebrew. In Arabic, it can also mean "joy" or "happiness."
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Old and barren, but received a miraculous promise from God. Sarah died at the age of 127 (Genesis 23:1). Abraham bought a burial place for her in Machpelah (Genesis 23:17-20), which was the first piece of land he owned in the promised land, a sign of God's faithfulness to His promise of the land.
  - **Her Role in Jesus' Victory:** Her miraculous pregnancy in old age (Genesis 18:11-14; 21:1-7) is proof of God's faithfulness to His promises and serves as a preview of the miracle of Jesus' birth from a virgin. She is an essential link in the Messianic genealogy.
  - **Satan's Influence:** Sarah's impatience and her suggestion that Abraham conceive a child with Hagar (Genesis 16) can be seen as a subtle influence of evil, an attempt to bypass God's timing and method for the promised seed and thereby threaten the purity of the Messianic line. However, God's sovereignty ensured that His original plan for Isaac would prevail. Sarah's laughter of doubt about God's promise of a son in her old age (Genesis 18:13) can be seen as a human weakness that Satan could have exploited to sow unbelief and try to thwart God's plan.
- **Isaac (Gen_21:1-8; Gen_22:1-24; Gen_24:1-67; Gen_25:19-34; Gen_26:1-35; Gen_27:1-46; Gen_28:1-5):**
  - **Who:** Isaac is in the direct Messianic lineage and was the second patriarch of the Israelite nation, after Abraham. He was the promised son of Abraham and Sarah, born through God's miraculous intervention. Isaac's name means "he who laughs" or simply "laughter" (Genesis 21:6).
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Isaac lived in the time of the patriarchs, who received and passed on the covenant promises of God. He mostly lived in the area of Beersheba and is the only patriarch who did not leave Canaan (Genesis 26:2). Isaac married Rebekah (Genesis 24) and was the father of the twins Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25:24-26). Isaac was born around 1896 BC. He lived 180 years and died in 1716 BC. This means he lived approximately 1900 years before Christ.
  - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** The promises to Abraham were also confirmed to Isaac (Genesis 26:3-4; 28:13-14), further establishing the line from which the Saviour would come and emphasising the continuity of God's plan of salvation. Isaac's life is a symbol of obedience and trust, especially in the story of the sacrifice on Moriah (Genesis 22). This event is a powerful "type" of

Jesus' sacrifice: Abraham's willingness to offer his only son reflects God's willingness to give His only Son. Isaac carrying the wood for his own sacrifice is also a foreshadowing of Jesus carrying His cross. In Christian tradition, Isaac's sacrifice is often seen as a foreshadowing of Christ's crucifixion.

- **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence was visible in various attempts to threaten and corrupt the promised Messianic line. This includes the repetition of the Abimelech situation where Isaac presented Rebekah as his sister (Genesis 26), which jeopardised the security of the lineage. There was also family conflict, deception, and favouritism within his own household. Isaac's preference for Esau, who did not value spiritual things (see Hebrews 12:16), could have been an attempt to undermine God's plan. The fact that Rebekah and Jacob deceived Isaac to give the blessing to Jacob (Genesis 27) can be seen as a spiritual battle – where God's plan was carried out through human intrigue, but where Satan also tried to sow confusion and division. Despite these human weaknesses and Satan's attempts, God's faithfulness ensured that His covenant promises would continue through this line, proving that God's plan cannot be stopped by Satan, even if he tries to distort it. Even spiritual leaders like Isaac are not free from spiritual attacks.

- **Jacob (Israel) (Gen_28:1-22; Gen_35:1-29; Gen_49:1-33):**
  - **Who:** Jacob was a key figure in the Bible, known as the son of Isaac and Rebekah, and the grandson of Abraham. He is the twin brother of Esau, and later received the name Israel after an intense encounter with God at the Jabbok River (Genesis 32:28). Jacob is the patriarch of the 12 tribes of Israel, which descended from his sons. His name means "heel-grabber" or "deceiver," because he held onto Esau's heel at birth. After a nocturnal struggle with an angel or God Himself, he received the name Israel, meaning "wrestler with God."
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Jacob's descendants formed the Israelite nation. His story is a journey from deception to faith, and his wrestling with God symbolises personal transformation. He is honoured in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as a patriarch of faith. Jacob was born around 1836 BC. He lived 147 years and died in 1689 BC. His life thus took place approximately 1800 years before Christ.
  - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Jacob is a further link in the Messianic genealogy. The promises to Abraham and Isaac were also confirmed to him (Genesis 28:13-14), further establishing the line from which the Saviour would come and emphasising the continuity of God's plan. The prophecy in Genesis 49:10 about the sceptre not departing from Judah until Shiloh (the Messiah) comes, directly connects Him with this lineage through Jacob's son Judah. His life, marked by struggle and transformation, serves as an example of God's sovereignty working even through human weaknesses to accomplish His plan.
  - **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence was visible in the deception and conflict within Jacob's family (e.g., Jacob's deception of Esau in Genesis 27, the jealousy and strife among his sons), which repeatedly threatened the continuation of the Messianic line. Jacob's fear of Esau and his flight (Genesis 27-28) was also a period of vulnerability that Satan could have exploited. Isaac's preference for Esau, who did not value spiritual things (see Hebrews 12:16), could have been an attempt to undermine God's plan. The fact that Rebekah, who knew God's will, and Jacob deceived Isaac to give the blessing

to Jacob (Genesis 27) was a human sin, but God sovereignly used it to achieve His purpose, despite Satan's attempts to sow confusion and division and thwart the divine plan. Despite these human errors and Satan's attempts, God's faithfulness ensured that His covenant promises would continue through this line.

- **Judah:** (*Gen 37:12-36*)
  - **Who:** Judah is the fourth son of Jacob and Leah. He is the patriarch of the most important tribe of Israel and the ancestor of King David. Judah conceived the plan to sell Joseph as a slave, but he is also the one willing to become a slave in Benjamin's place. The name Judah means "praise to God." Judah is also known as the ancestor of King David and Jesus, as Jesus is believed to be a descendant of the line of David, who in turn was a descendant of Judah. This lineage is important in both Jewish and Christian traditions, as it establishes Jesus' justification to the throne of David and His place as the Messiah and Saviour.
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Judah played a key role in the story of Joseph, his half-brother. He stepped forward to plead for the life of his younger brother Benjamin and offered himself as a substitute. Before Israel became a nation, the future rulership was prophesied.
  - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Jacob prophesied that the sceptre would not depart from Judah until Shiloh (the Messiah) comes (Genesis 49:10). This places emphasis on the tribe of Judah as the royal line from which Jesus would come. Both Mary and Joseph's genealogies connect them directly to the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:2-3; Luke 3:33).
  - **Satan's Influence:** Judah's involvement in the selling of Joseph to Ishmaelites (Genesis 37:26-27) and his moral fall with Tamar (Genesis 38) are examples of the sin and moral compromises that Satan could have used to try to undermine the purity and continuity of the Messianic line. These events show how God can even use or overcome human errors and sinful acts to bring about His greater plan of salvation

Role Players in Jesus' Life and Salvation History: Part III - The Kings and Prophets before Jesus Birth

This section examines the influential figures of kings and prophets in the Old Testament, whose lives and messages further revealed God's plan of salvation and prepared the way for the coming of the Messiah. They conveyed God's will to the people, confirmed His covenant promises, and often directly or indirectly referred to the future Saviour.

God the Father

The **origin of the plan of salvation** lies with God the Father. Already in Gen_3:15, after the Fall, the first promise of a saviour is made: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." This "seed of the woman" is the first prophecy of Jesus. Throughout the Old Testament, God's plan for salvation is further unfolded through covenant promises.

Key Kings and Prophets

These individuals each played a unique and indispensable role in the continuation of God's plan of salvation and the preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

- **Moses (Exo_2:1 to Exo_4:31 and Deu_18:15, 18):**
    - **Who:** Moses was an important prophet and leader of the Israelites. According to the Bible, Moses was born in Egypt as the son of Hebrew parents, Amram and Jochebed (Exo_2:1-2). He led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai (Exodus chapters 19 to 20). Moses is also traditionally considered the author of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible).
    - **Time and Circumstances:** Moses was born in Egypt during a time when Pharaoh commanded that all Jewish baby boys be killed (Exo_1:15-22). His mother, Jochebed, placed him in a basket in the Nile River, where Pharaoh's daughter found him and raised him as her own (Exo_2:3-10). Moses later married Zipporah in Midian and had two sons with her, Gershom and Eliezer (Exo_2:21-22; Exo_18:3-4). His life was a central point in the exodus of Israel from Egypt, a key event in salvation history. Moses was born around 1571 BC and lived to be 120 years old (Deu_34:7).
    - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Moses is a powerful "type" of Jesus Christ.
        - **Prophet like Moses:** Moses prophesied that a prophet like himself would arise (Deu_18:15-18), which applies directly to Jesus as the ultimate Prophet and Mediator.
        - **Messianic Lineage:** Although Moses did not directly prophesy the Messiah's tribe (that was Jacob's prophecy about Judah), he was instrumental in the preservation and guidance of the people from whom the Messiah would come.
        - **Lifted-up Serpent:** Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness for the healing of the Israelites (Num_21:8-9), which is a clear typology of Jesus being lifted up on the cross for the salvation of humanity (Joh_3:14-15).

        - **Rock of Salvation:** Moses struck the rock in the wilderness from which water flowed (Exo_17:6), which is a typology of Jesus serving as the "Rock of our salvation" and providing living water (1Co_10:4).
        - **Transfiguration:** Jesus appeared like Moses on a mountain in glory during the transfiguration (Mat_17:1-13), drawing parallels with Moses' encounter with God on Mount Sinai (Exo_24:15-18).
        - **Fulfillment of the Law and New Covenant:** Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (Mat_5:17), and instituted a new covenant that replaces and perfects the Old Covenant given through Moses (Heb_8:6-13).
        - **Intercession for the People:** Moses pleaded with God and begged for mercy for the people (Exo_32:1-35).
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan constantly tried to thwart God's plan through Moses.
        - **Doubt and Resistance:** Satan exploited Moses' anxiety and doubt when he appeared before the burning bush (Exo_3:11-12; Exo_4:1-17), and fueled his initial resistance to God's calling.
        - **Pharaoh's Hardening:** Satan hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not listen to Moses' warnings (Exo_7:3-5; Exo_9:12; Exo_10:1), which delayed the exodus.
        - **Israelite Rebellion:** Satan incited the Israelites' complaints and rebellion, causing them to repeatedly rebel against Moses and God (Exo_14:10-12; Exo_15:22-24; Exo_16:2-3; Numbers 14).
        - **Satan's Failure and God's Victory:** Despite these attacks, God's sovereignty prevailed.
            - **God's Revelation and Confirmation:** God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, breaking Satan's power over Moses' fear (Exo_3:2-4). God equipped Moses with signs and wonders to overcome Satan's doubt and resistance (Exo_4:1-31).
            - **Victory over Pharaoh:** God helped Moses to triumph over Pharaoh through the plagues and the crossing of the Red Sea, which overturned Satan's plans to keep the Israelites in slavery (Exo_12:29-30; Exo_14:13-31).
            - **God's Faithfulness to Moses:** God appointed Moses as leader and kept him faithful, even in the presence of Satan's temptation and the people's rebellion (Num_12:7, Deu_34:10-12).
            - **Trust in God's Word:** Moses defeated the devil by trusting God (Heb_11:27), just as Jesus defeated the devil by trusting God's Word during His temptation in the wilderness (Mat_4:1-11).
- **Melchizedek (Gen_14:17-24; Psa_110:4):**
    - **Who:** A king of Salem and priest of God Most High, who blessed Abraham. He is unique because he has no genealogy and his priesthood was not from Aaron.
    - **Time and Circumstances:** He appears briefly in the time of Abraham, after Abraham defeated the kings. His appearance is mysterious and without a clear origin or end.
    - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Hebrews 7 explains that Jesus is a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" – an eternal and superior priesthood

that is higher than the Levitical priesthood. This points to Jesus' unique and eternal priestly role.
    - **Satan's Influence:** There is no direct mention of Satan's influence on Melchizedek, but his priesthood, which was independent of the sinful human lineage, can be seen as untouched by the typical attacks that plagued the Messianic line.
- **Samuel (1 Samuel 1-25):**
    - **Who:** Samuel was a key figure in the transitional period from the judges to the monarchy in Israel. He was a prophet, priest, and judge (1Sa_3:20; 1Sa_7:15-17), and anointed both Saul and David as kings. His name means "heard by God" or "his name is God." He was the son of Elkanah and Hannah, and was dedicated to God as a child through his mother's vow (1Sa_1:1-28). He served as a prophet and conveyed God's messages to the Israelites (1Sa_3:20; 1Sa_8:10). He ruled as judge over Israel and helped them uphold justice (1Sa_7:15-17). He also served as a priest and offered sacrifices to God (1Sa_2:18; 1Sa_7:9-10). He played an important role in the story of King Saul and King David, both of whom he anointed as king of Israel (1Sa_10:1; 1Sa_16:13).
    - **Time and Circumstances:** Samuel lived during the period of the judges in Israel, around 1100-1050 BC (or approximately 1070-1010 BC according to some calculations). It was a period of great spiritual and political instability in Israel. The people had fallen away from God and the priesthood under Eli was corrupt. Samuel led Israel in a time of Philistine oppression and called the people to repentance. He resisted the people's request for a king, but accepted God's will and anointed Saul. When Saul was disobedient, Samuel anointed David as the next king. Samuel was a devout man who obeyed God (1Sa_3:19-20). He was a man of integrity who could not be bribed (1Sa_12:3-5). Samuel loved God's people and helped them whenever he could (1Sa_7:3-14; 1Sa_12:23).
    - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Samuel's role as prophet, priest, and anointer of kings is directly linked to the establishment of the Messianic, royal line through David.
        - **Establishment of the Monarchy:** By anointing Saul and especially David (1Sa_10:1; 1Sa_16:13), Samuel paved the way for the royal line from which Jesus would come. The covenant with David, which includes the eternal throne promise, is a direct precursor to Jesus' royal reign.
        - **Prophet and Judge:** Samuel served as a prophet and announced the coming Saviour (Jesus) through his prophetic ministry (1Sa_2:10). He led the people in a time of spiritual decline and brought them back to God, which is a foreshadowing of Jesus' role as the ultimate Judge and Shepherd of His people.
        - **Priestly Role:** Samuel served as a priest and offered sacrifices, but Jesus is the eternal High Priest who connects us with God through His perfect sacrifice (Heb_5:6; Heb_7:21).
        - **Ancestral Connection:** Samuel anointed David as king, and David was Jesus' ancestor (1Sa_16:13, Mat_1:1). Samuel also knew Jesse, David's father, and Jesse was also Jesus' ancestor (1Sa_17:12, Luk_3:32).

        - **Obedience:** Samuel's life of obedience to God, even when the people preferred a king over God, emphasizes the importance of God's sovereign plan being carried out through faithful servants.
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan tried to thwart God's plan by:
        - **Corruption of the Priesthood:** The wickedness of Eli's sons (Hophni and Phinehas) was an attempt to defile the spiritual leadership and lead the people away from God.
        - **People's Rebellion:** The Israelites' persistent desire for an earthly king "like all the nations" (1Sa_8:5) was a rejection of God's direct rule and an attempt to bypass God's sovereignty.
        - **Saul's Disobedience:** Satan exploited Saul's pride and disobedience, which led to his rejection as king and the threat to the royal line.
        - **Satan's Failure:** Despite these attempts, God used Samuel to accomplish His will. God used Samuel's impeccable leadership to guide the people and anoint the rightful king, David, which secured the Messianic line. God's plan to establish an eternal kingdom through David thwarted Satan's attempts to destroy the royal line. Jesus' resurrection broke Satan's power over death, just as Samuel announced God's victory over Israel's enemies (1Sa_2:6-10), which is a foreshadowing of Christ's ultimate victory over death (1Co_15:55-57).
- **David (2 Samuel 7; Psalms 89 and 132):**
    - **Who:** King David was an important figure in the Old Testament of the Bible. He was 30 years old when he became king and he was the second king of Israel and reigned for 40 years (2Sa_5:4). Israel's greatest king and a man after God's own heart (1Sa_13:14; Act_13:22). He was the son of Jesse and continued the Messianic lineage through the tribe of Judah (Rth_4:22; Mat_1:6). David was also a prophet and wrote many psalms that are included in the Bible (Act_2:30; Psalms 2, 22 and 110).
    - **Time and Circumstances:** David lived around 1040-970 BC and reigned over a united Israel. God made an eternal covenant with him, promising that his throne would be established forever through one of his descendants (2Sa_7:12-16). His life was marked by wars, the establishment of Jerusalem as the capital, and personal sins (such as his sin with Bathsheba), but also deep repentance and devotion to God (Psalms 51).
    - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Jesus is repeatedly called the "Son of David," confirming His Messianic and royal claim (Mat_1:1; Mat_9:27; Mat_21:9). His birth in Bethlehem, the city of David, emphasizes this connection (Mic_5:1; Mat_2:1). The eternal throne promise to David was fulfilled in Jesus, who is the eternal King (Luk_1:32-33; Rev_19:16). David's prophetic psalms also predicted many aspects of the Messiah's life, suffering, and reign.
    - **Satan's Influence:** David was a good king, but not without flaws, and Satan tried to exploit these weaknesses. Satan tried to influence David in various ways, especially through temptations that led to sin (e.g., his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah – 2 Samuel 11), and by inciting David to number the people (1Ch_21:1), which provoked God's wrath. These attempts threatened the stability of David's kingdom and the purity of the Messianic line. Despite Satan's attacks and David's sins, God's covenant and grace ensured that His plan would continue. David's deep repentance and his constant return to God emphasized God's faithfulness to His promises.

- **Isaiah (Isa_7:14; Isa_9:5-6; Isa_53):**
    - **Who:** Isaiah was a prophet in the Old Testament of the Bible, known as the "evangelical prophet" because of his many prophecies about the Messiah. He lived and prophesied in Jerusalem during the period of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah (around 740-680 BC). He was the son of Amoz (note, not the prophet Amos, but another person with the same name).
    - **Time and Circumstances:** Isaiah served as a prophet and conveyed God's messages to the kings and people of Judah. The book of Isaiah in the Bible contains his prophecies and writings, spanning 66 chapters. It was a time of political instability and spiritual decline in Israel and Judah. His most famous prophecies include: the birth of the Messiah (Isa_7:14, Isa_9:2-7), the victory over Babylon (Isa_13, Isa_21), and the restoration of Israel (Isa_40-66).
    - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Isaiah gave some of the most specific prophecies about Jesus' birth and ministry. He prophesied about a virgin who would conceive and bear a son, Immanuel (Isa_7:14). He also described the Child who would be born as "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa_9:5-6). Isaiah 53 describes in detail the suffering and substitutionary sacrifice of the Servant of the LORD, which refers directly to Jesus Christ. Isaiah's prophecies are known for their accuracy and depth, and he is considered one of the greatest prophets in the Bible.
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan tried to undermine Isaiah's message by inciting the unbelief and rebellion of the people and their leaders (e.g., King Ahaz). The spiritual blindness and hardness of heart that Isaiah described (Isa_6:9-10) were a manifestation of Satan's influence to reject God's truth and thereby try to prevent the coming of the Messiah. Satan's tactics include:
        - **Anxiety and doubt:** Satan tried to undermine Isaiah's faith by making him doubt his prophecies and God's plans (Isa_7:2-9).
        - **Criticism and mockery:** Satan incited the kings and people of Judah to criticise and mock Isaiah, to undermine his message (Isa_28:9-10, Isa_30:10).
        - **Materialistic temptation:** Although Isaiah himself resisted, the people's focus on wealth and power (a tactic of Satan) was a constant struggle that Isaiah had to address (Isa_5:8-10).
        - **Physical threat:** Satan even tried to physically harm Isaiah, but God protected him (2 Kings 18:36-37, Isa_37:14-20).
        - **God's victory over Satan's attacks:** Despite Satan's attempts, God's sovereignty and faithfulness prevailed.
            - **Visions and revelations:** God gave Isaiah visions and revelations to strengthen him and confirm his faith (Isa_1:1, Isa_6:1-13).
            - **Protection:** God protected Isaiah from Satan's physical threats and enabled him to continue his message (Isa_37:14-20, 2 Kings 19:35-36).
            - **Confirmation:** God confirmed Isaiah's prophecies by bringing them to pass, which strengthened Isaiah's faith and testimony (Isa_40-66).
- **Jeremiah (Jer_1:1-19; Jer_31:31-34):**
    - **Who:** Jeremiah was a prophet who conveyed God's message of judgment and hope to Judah. He is often called the "weeping prophet" because of his deep

sorrow over the sins of his people and the approaching judgment (Jer_9:1; Jer_13:17). He was the son of Hilkiah, a priest from Anathoth in the land of Benjamin (Jer_1:1). God called and appointed him as a prophet to the nations even before his birth (Jer_1:4-5).

- **Time and Circumstances:** Jeremiah prophesied from the 13th year of King Josiah's reign (around 627 BC) until after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC and even thereafter (Jer_1:2-3). It was a time of profound political and spiritual crisis for Judah, characterised by idolatry, social injustice, and a series of weak kings that ultimately led to the Babylonian exile. Jeremiah relentlessly proclaimed God's message of warning and judgment, even though it brought him persecution, imprisonment, and rejection by his own people (Jer_20:1-2; Jer_37:11-16).
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Jeremiah's ministry emphasized the necessity of God's judgment on sin, but also the promise of restoration and a new relationship with God.
  - **Prophecy of the New Covenant:** Jeremiah prophesied the new covenant that God would make with His people: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer_31:31). This new covenant, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, would be characterised by God's law written on hearts, forgiveness of sin, and an intimate knowledge of God (Heb_8:8-12; Heb_10:16-17).
  - **Preparation for Messianic Time:** By revealing the people's sinfulness and its consequences, Jeremiah underscored the depth of humanity's need for a Saviour. The exile and subsequent restoration prepared the people for the Messianic era.
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan opposed Jeremiah's ministry by:
  - **People's Hardness of Heart:** The Israelites' refusal to listen and repent was a constant source of frustration for Jeremiah and a sign of Satan's success in blinding them (Jer_5:21; Jer_7:24).
  - **Persecution of Jeremiah:** Jeremiah experienced intense persecution from his own people, the priests, false prophets, and kings (Jer_11:18-23; Jer_20:1-6; Jer_37:11-16). This was an attempt to silence God's message and discourage the prophet.
  - **False Prophets:** Satan used false prophets to deceive the people with false hope and lead them away from Jeremiah's true message (Jer_14:13-14; Jer_23:9-40).
  - **Exile as a Threat:** The Babylonian exile was a major threat to the survival of the Messianic line and the people of Israel as a whole.
  - **God's Victory:** Despite Satan's attempts, God's faithfulness to His covenant ensured that a remnant would return and the promises would be fulfilled (Jer_29:10-14). Jeremiah's perseverance, despite the opposition, is proof of God's power working through him, and God's promise to protect him (Jer_1:18-19).

- **Daniel (Book of Daniel):**
  - **Who:** Daniel was a prophet and an important figure in the Old Testament of the Bible. He lived during the Babylonian exile (around 605-536 BC). He was the son of unknown parents, but he was of Jewish descent. Known for his unwavering faith, wisdom, and integrity amidst a pagan environment. He served under various Babylonian and Persian kings, including

Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus. His name means "God is my judge."

- **Time and Circumstances:** He was a prophet who received and interpreted complex visions and dreams from God. He and his three friends (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, later known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) were taken to Babylon as young men. They refused to compromise their faith, even under threat of death (e.g., the vegetable diet, the fiery furnace, the lions' den). Daniel held a high position in the royal government, which gave him unique insight into world events.
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** The book of Daniel in the Bible contains his prophecies and writings, spanning 12 chapters. Most famous prophecies:
  - **Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan_2:1-49)**
  - **The writing on the wall (Dan_5:1-31)**
  - **Daniel's 70 weeks (Dan_9:24-27)**
  - **The coming of the Messiah (Dan_7:13-14, Dan_9:25-26)**
  - **The Eternal Kingdom:** He had visions of an eternal kingdom that would be established by God, which would destroy all earthly kingdoms and stand forever (Dan_2:44; Dan_7:13-14) – a clear reference to Christ's kingdom.
  - **"Son of Man":** Daniel's vision of "one like the Son of Man" coming with the clouds of heaven and receiving eternal dominion (Dan_7:13-14) is a key text that Jesus later applied to Himself.
  - **Preservation of the Lineage:** Through his faithfulness and God's protection, Daniel and the Jewish exiles ensured the continued existence of the nation of Israel, from whom the Messiah would come.
  - Daniel's prophecies are known for their accuracy and depth, and he is considered one of the greatest prophets in the Bible.
- **Satan's Influence:**
  - **Attempts at Destruction:** Satan tried to physically destroy Daniel and his friends (the fiery furnace in Dan_3, the lions' den in Dan_6) to silence God's witnesses and threaten the Messianic line.
  - **Spiritual Opposition:** The "prince of Persia" (Dan_10:13) indicates spiritual forces that Satan used to oppose Daniel's prayers and hinder God's plans.
  - **Deception and Idolatry:** The Babylonian culture, with its idolatry and pride, was a constant temptation for Daniel and his people to turn away from God.
  - **Satan's Failure:** Despite these intense attacks, God miraculously protected Daniel and, through him, revealed His sovereignty over earthly kingdoms and spiritual powers. Daniel's perseverance and God's faithfulness ensured that the prophecies about the Messiah's coming remained intact.

- **Zechariah (Zec_9:9; Zec_11:12-13):**
  - **Who:** Zechariah was a prophet in the Old Testament of the Bible. He lived during the period of the Persian empire, a Post-exilic prophet who encouraged the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of Jerusalem after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile (around 520-480 BC). Zechariah was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, a priest from Jerusalem (Zec_1:1). Zechariah is a Hebrew name meaning "God has remembered" or "God's remembrance."

- **Time and Circumstances:** Zechariah prophesied in the time of Darius I (around 520-518 BC), along with the prophet Haggai, after the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile.
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Zechariah gave several specific prophecies about the Messiah. He served as a prophet and conveyed God's messages to the Jews who had returned from exile. The book of Zechariah in the Bible contains his prophecies and writings, spanning 14 chapters. Here is a list of his most famous prophecies:
  - **The Messiah on a donkey:** He prophesied about the Messiah riding on a donkey (Zec_9:9), which was directly fulfilled in Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
  - **The rebuilding of the temple:** He encouraged the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem (Zec_1:7-17, Zec_4:6-10), which was a physical preparation for the coming of the Messiah.
  - **The restoration of Israel:** Zechariah also prophesied about the spiritual and physical restoration of Israel (Zec_2:1-13, Zec_8:1-23).
  - **The coming Messiah:** He gave further Messianic prophecies, including about the "Branch" (Zec_3:8-10, Zec_6:12-13).
  - **Betrayal for 30 pieces of silver:** He also predicted the 30 pieces of silver for which the Messiah would be sold (Zec_11:12-13), which was fulfilled in Judas' betrayal.
  - Zechariah's prophecies are known for their hope and encouragement for the Jews who returned from exile, and he is considered one of the important prophets in the Bible.
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan tried to hinder the restoration of Jerusalem and the temple through opposition and discouragement (Zec_3:1), which would impede the preparation for the Messiah's coming. However, Zechariah's visions show God's victory over Satan's accusations and His protection of His people.

Other Important Prophets

- **Elijah (1 Kings 17-19; 21; 2 Kings 1-2):**
  - **Who:** Elijah was known for his fiery zeal and could sometimes be very direct and sharp. For example, his confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Carmel (1 Kings 18). He also prophesied drought over the land due to the people's sin (1 Kings 17:1). His ministry called the people to repentance and combated idolatry.
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Elijah prophesied in the 9th century BC in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, especially during the reign of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. It was a time of intense idolatry and moral decay, with the worship of Baal being widespread. Elijah's ministry focused on restoring the monotheistic worship of the LORD.
  - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Elijah is seen as a forerunner of John the Baptist, who would come in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the Messiah (Luk_1:17; Mat_11:14). His ascension in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:11) is a unique event that underscores his special place in God's plan. He also appeared with Moses on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mat_17:3), confirming his prophetic role in the Messianic era.

- **Satan's Influence:** Satan tried to stop Elijah's ministry by inciting the idolatry of Baal and the persecution by Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-3). He also exploited Elijah's discouragement and desire to die (1 Kings 19:4). Despite these attacks, God protected Elijah, fed him, and continued his ministry, thwarting Satan's attempts to destroy the true worship of God.

- **Elisha (2 Kings 2-8):**
  - **Who:** Elisha was Elijah's successor and received a double portion of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9). He performed many miracles, including healing Naaman's leprosy (2 Kings 5) and raising the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4). In 2 Kings 2:23-24, it is told how Elisha pronounced a curse on young boys who mocked him, after which two bears came out of the woods and mauled 42 of them. This incident is often interpreted as a demonstration of God's authority through His prophet, and the seriousness of mocking God's servant, rather than mere personal revenge.
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Elisha prophesied in the 9th century BC in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, after Elijah's ascension. His ministry was characterised by miracles and practical help to the people, demonstrating God's care and power in their daily lives.
  - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Elisha's miracles, especially his healings and resurrections from the dead, are a foreshadowing of Jesus' own miracles and His power over sickness and death. His ministry emphasized God's compassion and His ability to provide for the needs of His people, all of which are fully revealed in Jesus Christ.
  - **Satan's Influence:** Satan tried to oppose Elisha's ministry through sickness, famine, and enemy attacks (e.g., the Arameans who tried to capture him – 2 Kings 6:8-23). These attempts were aimed at undermining God's plan of salvation by discrediting or destroying the prophet. However, God protected Elisha and, through him, showed His power over these challenges, thwarting Satan's plans.
- **Amos (Book of Amos):**
  - **Who:** Amos was a prophet of social justice who sharply condemned the rich and powerful for their oppression of the poor. His book is full of "Woe!" exclamations and announcements of God's judgment on Israel and the surrounding nations. He was a sheep breeder and fig-grower from Tekoa, not a professional prophet (Amos 1:1; 7:14-15).
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Amos prophesied in the 8th century BC during the reign of King Uzziah of Judah and King Jeroboam II of Israel. It was a time of economic prosperity, but also of great social injustice and spiritual decline in Israel. Amos warned the people of the approaching judgment due to their sins.
  - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Amos's message of justice and the necessity of true worship, rather than mere rituals, prepares the way for Jesus' teaching on righteousness and mercy (Mat_23:23). His prophecies about the restoration of David's fallen tent (Amos 9:11-12) are applied in the New Testament (Acts 15:16-18) to the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's kingdom through Jesus Christ.
  - **Satan's Influence:** Satan tried to suppress Amos's message by promoting the people's injustice and idolatry, which blinded them to God's warnings. The resistance to Amos's message, especially from the priests and kings (Amos

7:10-13), was an attempt to silence God's truth. Despite this opposition, God preserved Amos's message and used it as a testimony for future generations.

- **Malachi (Book of Malachi):**
  - **Who:** This prophet, who appeared after the exile, sharply rebuked the priests and the people for their lukewarmness, dishonest offerings, and neglect of the law. He announced God's wrath upon them if they did not repent (e.g., Mal_1:6-14; Mal_2:1-9). His name means "my messenger."
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Malachi prophesied around 450 BC, after the return from the Babylonian exile, during the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of Jerusalem. It was a time of spiritual apathy and indifference among the people, and the last prophet before the 400 years of silence before the coming of John the Baptist.
  - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Malachi's prophecies serve as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. He predicted the coming of a messenger who would prepare the way for the LORD (Mal_3:1), which was fulfilled in John the Baptist (Mat_11:10). He also prophesied about the "Sun of Righteousness" who would rise with healing in His wings (Mal_4:2), a clear Messianic reference to Jesus Christ.
  - **Satan's Influence:** Satan tried to erode the people's faith by promoting apathy, lukewarmness, and cynicism (Mal_1:2; Mal_3:14). The corruption of the priesthood and the neglect of God's law were attempts to spiritually weaken the people and leave them unprepared for the coming of the Messiah. Despite this spiritual decline, God, through Malachi, confirmed His promises of a coming Messiah and a day of judgment and restoration.

These kings and prophets, through God's inspiration, further laid the foundations and established the expectation of the Saviour in the heart of the Israelite people.

Role Players in Jesus' Life and Salvation History: Part IV - From Birth to Ascension

This section of the study focuses on the key role players and events that occurred from the period just before Jesus' birth, through His earthly ministry, to His ascension. These figures and events are directly involved in the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation in and through Jesus Christ.

Key Role Players in Jesus' Life and Ministry:

- **Jesus Christ, The Son:**
  - **Who:** Jesus Christ is the central figure of the Christian faith and the one who brings humanity's hope and salvation.
    - **The Son of God:** He is the only Son of God, sent to redeem humanity (Joh_3:16).
    - **The Messiah (Christ):** He is the long-awaited Messiah, the Christ, who came to fulfil God's plan of salvation for the Jewish nation and the whole world (Mat_1:1; Mar_1:1).
    - **The Saviour:** He came to redeem humanity from sin and death through His perfect life, crucifixion, and resurrection (Rom_5:8-11).
    - **The King of Kings:** He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the highest authority in heaven and on earth (Rev_19:16).
    - **The One who Loves:** He loved humanity and sacrificed His life to save us (Joh_15:13).
    - **The One who Rose:** He rose from the dead, proving His divine nature and His victory over sin and death (1Co_15:3-8).
  - **Time and Circumstances:** Jesus carried out His earthly ministry in the 1st century AD in Israel, a period of Roman occupation and intense Jewish expectation for the Messiah. His life was marked by a continuous confrontation with spiritual darkness and the unbelief of people. He lived in poverty, was rejected by many of His own people, and ultimately died on the cross.
  - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Jesus' entire life, death, and resurrection are the core of God's plan of salvation and the basis of His victory.
    - **Proclaimer of the Gospel:** Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of God's love, grace, and salvation, and announced the coming of the Kingdom of God (Mat_4:23; Mar_1:14-15).
    - **Healer of the Sick and Doer of Miracles:** He healed the sick, cast out demons, and performed miracles to prove His divine power and demonstrate the coming of God's Kingdom (Matthew 8-9; Mark 1-2).
    - **Teacher of the People:** Jesus taught the people about God's law, the principles of the Kingdom of God, and the true meaning of love and righteousness (Matthew 5-7; Mark 4).
    - **Saviour of Sinners:** He forgave sinners, redeemed them from their sin, and offered them a new life in Him (Luk_7:36-50; Joh_8:1-11).
    - **Fulfiller of Prophecies:** Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, from His birth to His death and resurrection (Mat_1:22-23; Mar_1:2-3).

        - **Founder of the Church:** He founded the church by choosing and training His disciples, and commanded them to spread His message worldwide (Mat_16:18-19; Mar_3:13-19).
        - **Sacrifice for Humanity:** Jesus gave His life as a perfect sacrifice for humanity's sin and salvation, thereby bringing about reconciliation between God and man (Joh_10:11; Rom_5:8).
    - **Satan's Influence on Jesus' Life:** Satan constantly tried to thwart Jesus' mission, tempt Him, and destroy Him, but Jesus consistently overcame him.
        - **Temptations in the Wilderness:** Satan directly tempted Jesus at the beginning of His ministry (Mat_4:1-11; Luk_4:1-13):
            - **First temptation:** Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger (Mat_4:3; Luk_4:3). Jesus replied: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Mat_4:4; Luk_4:4).
            - **Second temptation:** Satan tempted Jesus to throw Himself down from the temple roof so that angels could catch Him (Mat_4:5-6; Luk_4:9-10). Jesus replied: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Mat_4:7; Luk_4:12).
            - **Third temptation:** Satan tempted Jesus to worship all the kingdoms of the world in exchange for power and glory (Mat_4:8-9; Luk_4:5-7). Jesus replied: "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only'" (Mat_4:10; Luk_4:8).
        - **Inspiring Judas:** Satan inspired Judas Iscariot and entered him to betray Jesus (Luk_22:3; Joh_13:2; Joh_13:27).
        - **Attempted Destruction by Crucifixion:** Satan, through the Jewish leaders, Pilate, and the Roman soldiers, tried to destroy Jesus by having Him crucified (Joh_8:44; 1Pe_5:8).
        - **The Struggle in Gethsemane:** Jesus' deep prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He asked that the cup of suffering be taken from Him (Luk_22:42), was an intense human struggle and a demonstration of His complete submission to the Father's will, despite the immense pain that lay ahead. It was a battle against the forces of darkness that wanted to prevent Him from fulfilling the Father's plan.
        - **Mockery at the Cross:** Satan incited people to mock Jesus and question His divine power while He hung on the cross (Mat_27:40-43; Mar_15:29-32; Luk_23:35-39):
            - **The Robbers:** One of the robbers mocked Jesus: "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" (Luk_23:39). The other robber, however, acknowledged Jesus as innocent and asked: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luk_23:40-42).
            - **The People:** The people and passers-by said: "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross! ... He saved others; he cannot save himself! ... He trusts in God; let God rescue him now if he wants him!" (Mat_27:40-43).
        - Jesus remained silent and did not respond to their mockery, demonstrating His patience and His focus on fulfilling His Father's will.

        - **Satan's Failure:** Despite all of Satan's attempts, Jesus ultimately defeated him. Jesus broke Satan's power over sin and death through His death and resurrection (Col_2:15; Heb_2:14-15). The cross, which Satan thought was his victory, became the instrument of his defeat and Jesus' eternal triumph.
- **The Passover Lamb (Exodus 12):**
    - **Who:** Not a person, but a central symbol and ritual in Old Testament salvation history. It was a lamb without blemish that was sacrificed and whose blood was smeared on the doorposts to save the firstborn of Israel from the angel of death during the tenth plague in Egypt.
    - **Time and Circumstances:** The institution of the Passover took place during the night of the last plague in Egypt, just before the exodus of Israel from slavery (around 1446 BC). It is an annual commemoration for Israel.
    - **Its Role in Jesus' Victory:** Jesus is the ultimate "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Joh_1:29). His blood, shed on the cross, is the true redemption from sin and death, just as the blood of the Passover lamb saved the lives of the Israelites. Jesus is the fulfilment of the Passover feast.
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence was visible in Pharaoh's hardening of his heart and his refusal to let Israel go, which necessitated the institution of the Passover and the exodus. The angel of death was an instrument of God's judgment on Egypt, but Satan would have gladly destroyed the Israelites. The Passover lamb was God's provision to break Satan's power over death for His people.
- **John the Baptist:**
    - **Who:** John the Baptist was an important figure in the New Testament of the Bible. He was a prophet and preacher who prepared the way for the coming of Jesus Christ. He was the son of the priest Zechariah and Elizabeth, a relative of Mary, Jesus' mother, and he was born around 6 BC. According to the Bible, Elizabeth's unborn baby, John the Baptist, already knew in her womb that Mary was the mother of the Messiah. When Mary visited Elizabeth, John leaped in Elizabeth's womb for joy, and Elizabeth said:
        - "The baby in my womb leaped for joy" (Luk_1:44)
        - "Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luk_1:43)

      This event shows that John, even before his birth, had a special knowledge and recognition of Jesus' identity as the Messiah.

    - **Time and Circumstances:** The Romans had conquered the land and established their own laws, taxes, and administration. The Jews felt that their religious freedom and national identity were threatened, which led to various revolts, including the Jewish War in 66-73 AD. Roman rule also affected the economy and society of Israel, with many Jews living in poverty and unemployment. The Jews had missed a long period of prophecy and spiritual leadership, and there was a great expectation for a new prophet or Messiah. He was born in the time of King Herod the Great. Many Jews expected the coming Messiah (whom they called Jesus, but actually referred to a political leader) to come to:
        - Overthrow Roman rule

        - Restore Israel's independence
        - Establish a new, God-fearing government
        - Free the Jews from Roman taxes and oppression
        - They believed that the Messiah would be a military leader who would defeat the Romans and restore Israel's former glory. But Jesus' message was different – He preached about love, forgiveness, and spiritual liberation, not political power.
    - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** John received a calling to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah and to baptise people as a sign of repentance and cleansing. He preached in the wilderness and called people to repent and change their lives. John the Baptist showed who Jesus is in various ways:
        - **The Lamb of God:** John described Jesus as the "Lamb of God," who takes away the sins of the world (Joh_1:29).
        - **The One who Baptises with the Holy Spirit:** John said that Jesus is the One who baptises with the Holy Spirit, in contrast to his own water baptism (Joh_1:33).
        - **The Son of God:** John described Jesus as the "Son of God," which is the highest title for a Messiah (Joh_1:34).
        - **The One Sent Before Me:** John acknowledged that Jesus was sent before him, and that he himself was only a preparer for Jesus' coming (Joh_1:30).
        - **The One who is the Light of the World:** John described Jesus as the "light of the world," who dispels the darkness of sin and ignorance (Joh_1:4-5).
        - John baptised Jesus in the Jordan River, and the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove.
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence on John's life was visible in the opposition to his message and ultimately his death. He was later beheaded by King Herod Antipas because of his criticism of Herod's marriage to his brother's wife. John's role in the Bible is important because he prepared the way for Jesus' coming and called people to follow Jesus.

Mary:

- **Who:** Mary, Jesus' mother, was a young Jewish girl from Nazareth in Galilee, probably only 12 or 13 years old when the angel Gabriel appeared to her. She was betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter, and showed humble faith and obedience to God. Mary gave birth to Jesus without an earthly father, through the work of the Holy Spirit, and raised Him until He began His ministry.
- **Time and Circumstances:** Mary, Jesus' mother, lived in the 1st century BC, during the Roman Empire's rule over Israel. At that time, women were often seen as inferior, but God chose Mary for a great task – to be the mother of Jesus. The circumstances were also politically turbulent, with the Romans occupying Israel and the Jews expecting a Messiah to free them.
- **Her Role in Jesus' Victory:** She was a faithful follower of Jesus and was present at important events in His life, including His crucifixion.
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan tried to influence Mary's life, but God protected her. Satan's influence was primarily through:
    - **Joseph's Doubt:** Satan caused Joseph to doubt Mary's purity and the origin of her pregnancy (Mat_1:19-20).

        - **Herod's Attempted Murder:** Satan incited Herod to murder all baby boys in Bethlehem under 2 years old, in an attempt to kill Jesus (Mat_2:16).
        - **Mary's Anxiety and Fear:** Satan tried to undermine Mary's faith and trust in God by causing her to experience anxiety and fear. But God protected Mary and strengthened her faith, so that she could raise Jesus and fulfil her calling.

Joseph:

- **Who:** Joseph was Jesus' earthly father, though not His biological father. He was a carpenter from Nazareth and a righteous, God-fearing man. Joseph was betrothed to Mary, and when he discovered she was pregnant, he initially considered divorcing her secretly. But an angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him that the child Mary was expecting was from the Holy Spirit and would be called the Son of God. Joseph then accepted Mary as his wife and raised Jesus as his own son, playing an important role in Jesus' life and upbringing.
- **Time and Circumstances:** Joseph lived in the 1st century BC, during the Roman Empire's rule over Israel. He was a carpenter from Nazareth in Galilee, a small village in northern Israel. At that time, the Jews were under Roman rule, and the economy was weak. Joseph was a righteous and God-fearing man, and he played an important role in the Jewish community. The circumstances in which Joseph lived were also characterised by:
    - **Political Unrest:** The Romans occupied Israel, and the Jews expected a Messiah to free them.
    - **Economic Hardship:** Many Jews lived in poverty, and Joseph's carpentry work was probably his only income.
    - **Religious Tension:** The Jews had a strong faith, but the Romans tried to suppress their religious practices.
    - **Family Problems:** Herod's family was characterised by conflict and intrigue, with his wife Mariamne and his sons Alexander and Aristobulus all conspiring against him. He:
        - Rebuilt and expanded the temple in Jerusalem.
        - Founded a number of cities and towns, including Caesarea Maritima.
        - Built a strong army and extended his power over Judea and surrounding areas. But Herod was also known for his cruelty and tyranny, and had many people executed, including:
            - His own wife, Mariamne
            - His sons, Alexander and Aristobulus
            - Many Jewish leaders and priests
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Joseph played a very important role in the life of Jesus:
    - **Earthly Father:** Joseph was Jesus' earthly father, although he was not His biological father. He raised Jesus as his own son.
    - **Guardian and Protector:** Joseph protected and cared for Jesus, and taught Him how to be a good Jew.
    - **Obedience to God:** Joseph obeyed God's commands, even when it was difficult, such as when he accepted Mary as his wife.

        - **Teacher:** Joseph probably taught Jesus how to be a carpenter, and helped Him develop His skills.
        - **Example of Faith:** Joseph's faith and obedience to God were an example for Jesus, and helped Him develop His own faith. Joseph's role in Jesus' life was therefore very important, and he had a great influence on Jesus' development and faith.
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence on Joseph's life was primarily to threaten and destroy Jesus. Satan tried to influence Joseph by:
        - **Doubt and Anxiety:** Satan caused Joseph to doubt Mary's purity and the origin of her pregnancy, and made him anxious about the future.
        - **Herod's Attempted Murder:** Satan incited Herod to murder all baby boys in Bethlehem under 2 years old, in an attempt to kill Jesus.
        - **Joseph's Despair:** Satan tried to undermine Joseph's faith and trust in God, so that he would abandon Jesus or not protect Him. But God protected Joseph and strengthened his faith, so that he could protect and raise Jesus. Joseph's obedience to God and his faith in the angel's message helped him overcome Satan's influence.
- **Simeon and Anna:**
    - **Who:** Simeon and Anna were two righteous and devout figures in Jerusalem who played a key role in the early recognition of Jesus as the Messiah.
        - **Simeon:** He was a righteous and God-fearing man who awaited the consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him, and it was revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Luk_2:25-26). He held the baby Jesus in his arms in the temple and uttered a prophetic prayer, known as the Nunc Dimittis (Luk_2:29-32), in which he recognised Jesus as the light for the nations and the glory of Israel. He also prophesied to Mary that a sword would pierce her soul (Luk_2:34-35), indicating the future suffering she would experience as the mother of the Messiah.
        - **Anna:** She was a very old prophetess, a widow from the tribe of Asher, who served in the temple for 84 years with fasting and prayer (Luk_2:36-37). She arrived at the temple at the same moment as Simeon, saw the baby Jesus, and thanked God. Afterwards, she spoke about Him to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem (Luk_2:38).
    - **Time and Circumstances:** Simeon and Anna lived in the 1st century BC and AD, during a period of Roman occupation and intense Jewish expectation of the Messiah. They were part of a remnant in Israel who remained faithful to God and eagerly awaited the fulfilment of God's promises. Their regular presence in the temple indicates their profound devotion and spiritual vigilance.
    - **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** Simeon and Anna's roles were crucial for the early, prophetic confirmation of Jesus' identity as the Messiah and the Saviour.
        - **Prophetic Proclamation:** Both, led by the Holy Spirit, uttered prophetic words about Jesus that confirmed His divine identity and His future role (Luk_2:29-35; Luk_2:38).
        - **Witness to Jesus' Divine Nature:** Their recognition of Jesus as the Messiah, even while He was a baby, served as a powerful testimony to His divine origin and the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies.

        - **Preparation for Jesus' Ministry:** Through their public proclamation in the temple, they helped to prepare the way for Jesus' ministry and His message of salvation, and kept the hope of the Messiah alive among those who listened.
    - **Satan's Influence:** There is no biblical record of Satan's direct influence on Simeon and Anna. On the contrary, Scripture emphasises that they were led and filled by the Holy Spirit, which protected them from Satan's influence.
        - **Filled with the Holy Spirit:** Simeon's life was characterised by the presence of the Holy Spirit (Luk_2:25-26), which enabled him to recognise Jesus and prophesy, making him immune to Satan's deception.
        - **Devoted Service:** Anna's life of uninterrupted service in the temple, fasting, and prayer (Luk_2:37), gave her a strong spiritual foundation to stand against any of Satan's attacks.
        - **Faithfulness to God:** Both Simeon and Anna's unwavering faithfulness and devotion to God protected them from Satan's temptation and attempts to sow unbelief. They were witnesses to God's faithfulness and His inevitable plan, which neutralised Satan's power over them.
- **The Woman at the Well:**
    - **Who:** The woman at the well was a Samaritan woman, originally from the village of Sychar. She met Jesus at Jacob's well (John 4:5-7), where she had come to draw water. She had a notorious reputation in her community, having been married five times, and the man she was currently living with was not her husband (John 4:16-18). The fact that she came to draw water in the heat of the day, on her own, suggests that she was likely a social outcast who wanted to avoid other women.
    - **Time and Circumstances:** The story takes place in Samaria, a region with profound religious and cultural tensions with the Jews.
        - **Historical Conflict:** The enmity between the Jews and Samaritans arose after the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC (2 Kings 17:5-6, 24). The Assyrians resettled other peoples in Samaria, and they intermarried with the remaining Israelites. These people, who became the Samaritans, practised a syncretistic religion that combined elements of the Jewish faith and pagan customs (2 Kings 17:24-41).
        - **Religious Differences:** The Samaritans accepted only the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) as authoritative Scripture and worshipped on Mount Gerizim (John 4:20). The Jews regarded the Samaritans as unclean and apostate, and it was considered unthinkable for a Jew to speak with a Samaritan, especially a woman.

      The circumstances of Jesus' encounter with the woman were radical and broke all these social and religious rules. He, a Jewish man, directly engaged a Samaritan woman in conversation and asked her for water, which was a shock to both her and His disciples (John 4:9, 27).

    - **Her Role in Jesus' Victory:** The woman's interaction with Jesus was a turning point in her life and had a significant impact on her community.

        - **Receiving Living Water:** Jesus used the conversation to teach her a spiritual truth. He told her about "living water" that would quench her spiritual thirst forever (John 4:10-14). This was a metaphor for the eternal life He offers.
        - **Revelation of the Messiah:** After Jesus supernaturally revealed her past (John 4:17-18), she realised that He was more than just an ordinary man. She recognised Him as the Messiah, the Christ (John 4:25-26).
        - **The First Public Witness:** This woman, a social outcast with an immoral life, became the first person to openly testify to Jesus as the Messiah. She left her water jar at the well – a symbol of her old life and her social status – and ran to her village to tell the people (John 4:28-29).
        - **Spreading the Gospel:** Through her testimony, she spread the Gospel in her community and led the villagers to Jesus. Many Samaritans came to believe, not only because of her words but also because they themselves heard Jesus and recognised Him as the "Saviour of the world" (John 4:39-42).
    - **The Role of Satan in her life:** Although the Bible does not specifically state that Satan directly tempted her, we can see the impact of sin in her life.
        - **The Bondage of Sin:** Her life was characterised by a cycle of broken relationships and immorality. This pattern was evidence of humanity's fallen nature and the spiritual blindness that sin brings. She was spiritually searching and unfulfilled.
        - **Fear and Social Isolation:** The consequence of her sin was social rejection and fear, which forced her to live in isolation. She was trapped in a life without hope and viewed the Jews with suspicion (John 4:9).
        - **Spiritual Ignorance:** Like many of her time, she overlooked the profound truths of God's word. Her life was focused on earthly needs like water, while she was unaware of the spiritual thirst in her soul.
    - **How Jesus Won Her:** Jesus' encounter with the woman is a powerful illustration of His grace and love.
        - **Grace without Condemnation:** Jesus did not condemn her for her sins. Instead, He treated her with respect and compassion. He saw the deepest need of her heart and opened a path to salvation (John 4:10).
        - **Revelation of the Truth:** Jesus gently revealed her past, not to humiliate her, but to bring her to the realisation that He is the Messiah who knows everything (John 4:17-19).
        - **Replacing Fear with Hope:** Instead of fear and isolation, Jesus gave her a new identity and purpose. She transformed from an insignificant woman into a powerful evangelist who was the first person to proclaim the Gospel to an entire community. Her testimony and the faith of the Samaritans that resulted are proof of Jesus' victory in her life and in her village (John 4:39-42).

Herod the Great:

- **Who:** Herod the Great was a Roman vassal king of Judea, who reigned from 37 BC to 4 BC. He was an Idumean, a people who lived in the south of Judea,

and converted to the Jewish faith. Herod was a clever and ambitious leader, who expanded his power and influence through political and military means.

- **Time and Circumstances:** Herod was one of the vassal kings appointed by the Roman emperor to rule over various territories. The circumstances during Herod's reign were:
  - **Political Unrest:** The Roman Empire was expanding its power over the Middle East, which created tension and an expectation of change among various peoples.
  - **Economic Growth:** Herod's reign brought a period of economic growth and development in Judea, with the construction of new cities and infrastructure.
  - **Religious Tension:** The Jews had a strong faith, but Herod's reign also brought a period of religious tension, with the construction of pagan temples and the introduction of Roman customs.
  - **Family Problems:** Herod's family was characterised by conflict and intrigue, with his wife Mariamne and his sons Alexander and Aristobulus all conspiring against him. He:
    - Rebuilt and expanded the temple in Jerusalem.
    - Founded a number of cities and towns, including Caesarea Maritima.
    - Built a strong army and extended his power over Judea and surrounding areas. But Herod was also known for his cruelty and tyranny, and had many people executed, including:
      - His own wife, Mariamne
      - His sons, Alexander and Aristobulus
      - Many Jewish leaders and priests
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Herod the Great played an important role in the life of Jesus, although it was a negative role:
  - **Attempted Murder of Jesus:** Herod tried to kill Jesus when he heard that He was the "King of the Jews," and ordered all baby boys in Bethlehem under 2 years old to be murdered (Mat_2:16).
  - **Fear of Jesus' Power:** Herod was afraid that Jesus would take over his power and influence, and tried to eliminate Him. Herod's greatest fear was losing his power and influence, and he even tried to kill Jesus when he heard that He was the King of the Jews. Herod the Great's role in Jesus' life was to try to kill Him. He:
    - Gave orders to murder all baby boys in Bethlehem under 2 years old (Mat_2:16).
    - Tried to prevent Jesus' birth by questioning the wise men (Mat_2:1-8).
    - Used his power and influence to try to kill Jesus, fearing that He would threaten his position as king.
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence on Herod's life was great and affected his thoughts and actions:
  - **Fear and Paranoia:** Satan fuelled Herod's fear of his power and influence, making him paranoid about possible threats, including Jesus.
  - **Cruelty and Tyranny:** Satan strengthened Herod's cruelty and tyranny, which led him to decide to murder all baby boys in Bethlehem under 2 years old.

        - **Selfishness and Lust for Power:** Satan fuelled Herod's selfishness and lust for power, causing him to focus on his own interests and power rather than the welfare of his people.
        - **Loss of Faith and Morality:** Satan undermined Herod's faith and morality, causing him to doubt God's existence and his own moral values. Satan's influence on Herod's life was therefore very great, but God intervened and saved Jesus' life by warning Joseph and Mary to flee to Egypt (Mat_2:13-15).

The Wise Men:

- **Who:** The wise men (Magi) were not given a specific number or names in the Bible, but they were likely astronomers or priests from Persia (modern-day Iran) who predicted Jesus' birth by following a star (Mat_2:1-2).
- **Time and Circumstances:** The wise men lived in the 1st century BC, during the Roman Empire's rule over the Middle East. They were likely from Persia (modern-day Iran) and were part of a tradition that studied the stars and celestial phenomena. The circumstances of their time were characterised by:
    - **Political Unrest:** The Roman Empire was expanding its power over the Middle East, which created tension and an expectation of change among various peoples.
    - **Religious Diversity:** The Middle East was a melting pot of religions and philosophies, including Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Hellenism.
    - **Astronomy:** Their knowledge of astronomy enabled them to recognise and follow the special star as a sign of an important birth.
- **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** The wise men's role in Jesus' victory was significant:
    - **Recognition of Jesus' Divinity and Kingship:** They recognised Jesus as the King of the Jews and the Messiah, and worshipped Him. Their journey and gifts (gold, frankincense, and myrrh) symbolised His royalty, divinity, and future suffering/death.
    - **Witness to the Gentiles:** Their arrival from the East was a foreshadowing of the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's plan of salvation, demonstrating that Jesus came not only for the Jews but for all nations.
    - **Confirmation of Prophecy:** Their search for the newborn King in Bethlehem confirmed Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah's birthplace (Mic_5:2).
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence was indirect, primarily through Herod's attempt to use the wise men to locate and kill Jesus (Mat_2:7-8). However, God intervened through a dream, warning the wise men not to return to Herod (Mat_2:12), thereby thwarting Satan's murderous plot.

The Disciples:

- **Who:** The Disciples primarily refer to the twelve men Jesus chose to follow Him, receive His teachings, and later proclaim His message (Mar_3:13-19). They were ordinary people – fishermen, tax collectors, and others – who left everything to follow Jesus. Although they initially had flaws and misunderstandings, they were trained and

equipped by Jesus for an extraordinary task. The best known include Peter, James, and John, who were part of Jesus' inner circle.

- **Time and Circumstances:** The Disciples followed Jesus for approximately three years during His earthly ministry in the 1st century AD. They lived in a time of Roman occupation and Jewish religious tension, with an intense expectation of the Messiah. They experienced Jesus' miracles, teachings, and His suffering firsthand, which deeply shaped them. They witnessed His crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension.
- **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** The Disciples' role was fundamental for the continuation of Jesus' mission and the establishment of the early church.
    - **Witnesses of Jesus' Life:** They were eyewitnesses to Jesus' life, teachings, miracles, death, and resurrection, which made them credible witnesses (Act_1:8; Act_1:21-22).
    - **Foundation of the Church:** Jesus built His church on the foundation of the apostles (Eph_2:20; Mat_16:18). They carried the Gospel to the world after Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.
    - **Proclaimers of the Gospel:** They received the command to make disciples of all nations (Mat_28:19-20), and proclaimed the message of salvation through Christ.
    - **Church Concept:** The Disciples are the foundation of the universal church, transmitting the Gospel from generation to generation. Their lives demonstrate that God uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things for His kingdom.
    - **Bible Verse:** "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. Amen." (Mat_28:19-20)
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan constantly tried to undermine the Disciples and thereby thwart Jesus' mission.
    - **Doubt and Fear:** Satan sowed doubt and fear in their hearts, especially during Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, which led to their flight and Peter's denial (Mat_26:56; Mat_26:69-75).
    - **Distraction:** He tried to distract them from Jesus' spiritual mission towards earthly power and position (Mar_10:35-45).
    - **Betrayal:** The most direct influence was on Judas Iscariot, which led to Jesus' betrayal.
    - **Satan's Failure:** Despite their failures and Satan's attacks, Jesus restored them and equipped them with the Holy Spirit. Their faithfulness after the resurrection and Pentecost proved that God's plan would prevail through them, and that Satan's attempts to destroy the church would fail.

Pontius Pilate:

- **Who:** Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect (governor) of Judea from 26 to 36 AD. He was an important figure in the New Testament and played a key role in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He was a Roman official appointed by Emperor Tiberius to rule over Judea.
- **Time and Circumstances:** Pontius Pilate lived and reigned in the 1st century AD, during the Roman Empire's rule over Judea. The time and circumstances of his reign were characterised by:

    - **Roman Supremacy:** Judea was a Roman province under direct Roman control.
    - **Jewish Unrest:** The Jews were dissatisfied with Roman rule, and there were frequent revolts and tensions. Pilate often acted harshly against Jewish rebels and was known for his insensitivity towards Jewish religious customs.
    - **Political Pressure:** Pilate had to maintain a delicate balance between upholding Roman order and managing the restless Jewish population, while also wanting to retain the favour of Emperor Tiberius.
    - **Intrigue and Conflict:** He often came into conflict with the Jewish religious leaders, which further complicated his position.
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Pilate's role in Jesus' crucifixion was essential for the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation. Although he found Jesus innocent (Joh_18:38; Joh_19:4; Joh_19:6), he handed Him over to the Jewish leaders and the crowd to be crucified out of fear of an uprising and to protect his own political position (Mat_27:24-26; Luk_23:24-25). His decision, although unjust, made God's prophetic plan for Jesus' sacrificial death possible.
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan exploited Pilate's weaknesses and circumstances to try to thwart God's plan or manipulate it in a way that would seem like a victory for him. Satan's influence on Pilate was primarily through:
    - **Fear of Loss of Power:** Satan exploited Pilate's fear of the Jewish leaders' threat to report him to the emperor (Joh_19:12), which forced him to condemn Jesus against his better judgment.
    - **Political Ambition:** Satan fuelled Pilate's desire to maintain his position as prefect and increase his influence, which made him less inclined to go against the will of the crowd.
    - **Indifference to Truth:** Pilate's question "What is truth?" (Joh_18:38) and his ultimate unwillingness to stand up for the truth, was a manifestation of Satan's attempt to harden man's conscience and hinder God's plan.
    - **Satan's Failure:** Despite Satan's influence on Pilate and the Jewish leaders, God's sovereign plan for Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection was fulfilled. Pilate's decision unknowingly contributed to the greatest victory over sin and death, which meant Satan's ultimate defeat.

Judas Iscariot:

- **Who:** Judas Iscariot was one of Jesus' twelve disciples and played a key role in Jesus' betrayal and crucifixion. He was:
    - **One of Jesus' closest disciples:** Judas was part of Jesus' inner circle and witnessed His teachings and miracles.
    - **The treasurer:** He was responsible for the disciples' money (Joh_12:6).
    - **The betrayer:** Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and handed Him over to the Jewish leaders (Mat_26:14-16). He identified Jesus with a kiss (Mar_14:43-45). The name "Iscariot" probably refers to his hometown, Kerioth, in Judea, which distinguished him from the Galileans among the other disciples. John 6:71 describes him as "Judas, son of Simon Iscariot."
- **Time and Circumstances:** Judas Iscariot lived in the 1st century AD, during Jesus' earthly ministry and the Roman Empire's rule over Judea. The circumstances of his life were:
    - **Roman Supremacy and Jewish Unrest:** Like other Jews, he lived under Roman rule and was probably aware of the political and religious tensions.

    - **Jesus' Ministry:** He followed Jesus for approximately three years, witnessing His miracles, teachings, and His claim to Divinity.
    - **Personal Motives:** His motives for betrayal are complex, but the Bible indicates greed (Joh_12:6) and the influence of Satan as key factors.
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Judas Iscariot's betrayal, although an act of extreme evil, was a necessary part of God's sovereign plan for Jesus' sacrificial death and the salvation of humanity.
    - **Fulfilment of Prophecy:** His betrayal fulfilled Old Testament prophecies (Psa_41:9; Zec_11:12-13; Act_1:16).
    - **The Way to the Cross:** Without his betrayal, Jesus would not have been arrested and crucified at the precise time and manner God ordained.
    - **God's Sovereignty:** Judas's act demonstrates God's ability to use even the sinful acts of men to accomplish His greater, good plan.
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence on Judas was direct and decisive, leading to his betrayal.
    - **Greed:** Satan exploited Judas's inherent greed, which motivated him to sell Jesus for money (Joh_12:6).
    - **Satan Entered Him:** Scripture directly states that Satan entered Judas (Luk_22:3; Joh_13:27), giving him the ability to commit the betrayal.
    - **Hardening of Heart and Loss of Faith:** Satan hardened Judas's heart and undermined his faith, so that he no longer saw Jesus as the Messiah, but as an obstacle to his own expectations or desires.
    - **Worldly Remorse:** Although Judas showed remorse and returned the money (Mat_27:3-5), it was a worldly sorrow that did not lead to true repentance and life, but to suicide. This shows how Satan can drive a person to despair after achieving his goal.
    - **Satan's Failure:** Despite Satan's success in using Judas, his act ultimately led to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, which broke Satan's power over sin and death. Judas's betrayal unknowingly contributed to Satan's own defeat.

The Roman Soldiers:

- **Who:** The soldiers involved in Jesus' crucifixion were Roman soldiers under the command of Pontius Pilate. They were part of the Roman military force that maintained authority in Judea, probably members of a cohort or a detachment. They were professional soldiers trained in discipline, obedience, and the execution of Roman justice. The Bible does not mention specific names of the soldiers involved in the crucifixion but describes their collective actions.
- **Time and Circumstances:** The soldiers served in the 1st century AD in Judea, a province under strict Roman control. Their primary task was to maintain order, suppress revolts, and enforce Roman laws. During Passover, a time of heightened Jewish national and religious sentiments, tensions in Jerusalem were particularly high, requiring a larger military presence and vigilance. They were accustomed to carrying out crucifixions as a standard Roman punishment for criminals and rebels.
- **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** These soldiers, unknowingly, played an essential role in the fulfilment of God's plan of salvation. They were the instruments through which Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross was carried out, as prophesied in the Old Testament (e.g., Psalms 22; Isaiah 53). Their actions included:
    - **Arrest and Guarding:** They arrested and guarded Jesus after His capture (Joh_18:3; Joh_18:12).

    - **Flogging and Mockery:** They flogged Him, placed a crown of thorns on His head, and mocked Him by putting a purple robe on Him and mocking Him as the "King of the Jews" (Mat_27:27-31; Mar_15:16-20; Joh_19:1-3).
    - **Crucifixion:** They crucified Jesus between two criminals (Mat_27:35-38).
    - **Division of Clothing:** They divided His clothes among themselves by casting lots, which fulfilled an Old Testament prophecy (Psa_22:19; Joh_19:23-24).
    - **The Centurion's Confession:** The centurion who supervised the crucifixion recognised Jesus' divinity after His death: "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mar_15:39; Mat_27:54). This confession, amidst the darkness and earthquake, serves as a powerful testimony to Jesus' identity, even from those who crucified Him.
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan's influence on the Roman soldiers was indirect, working through the prevailing culture of brutality, the political pressure of the Jewish leaders on Pilate, and the soldiers' duty to carry out orders. They were instruments in Satan's attempt to destroy Jesus and thwart God's plan of salvation.
    - **Instruments of Cruelty:** Satan exploited the soldiers' willingness to commit cruel and humiliating acts (such as flogging and mockery) in his attempt to humiliate and destroy Jesus.
    - **Unawareness of God's Plan:** The soldiers were unaware of the divine drama unfolding and the prophetic fulfilment their actions brought about. Satan tried to stop the Messiah's mission but unknowingly contributed to its execution.
    - **Satan's Failure:** Despite the soldiers' role in Jesus' suffering and death, their actions ultimately led to the crucifixion, which was the culmination of God's plan to overcome sin and death. Jesus' resurrection finally broke Satan's power, proving that even the most evil acts can be used by God for His sovereign purpose.

Simon of Cyrene:

- **Who:** Simon of Cyrene was a man from Cyrene, a city in North Africa (modern-day Libya), who was in Jerusalem during Passover. He was the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mar_15:21), who possibly later became prominent figures in the early Christian church (see Rom_16:13, where Rufus's mother, possibly Simon's wife, is greeted by Paul).
- **Time and Circumstances:** Simon lived in the 1st century AD and was present in Jerusalem during the Passover feast, a time of great religious and political tension. He was probably a Jew or a proselyte who came to Jerusalem for the feast. He was forced to carry Jesus' cross (Mat_27:32; Mar_15:21; Luk_23:26) after Jesus collapsed under its weight, possibly due to the flogging and exhaustion. Roman soldiers had the right to compel any citizen to carry a burden for a certain distance.
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Simon of Cyrene's compelled role in carrying Jesus' cross has profound symbolic and prophetic significance for Jesus' victory and the Christian faith.
    - **Physical Help and Compassion:** He physically helped Jesus in His moment of extreme weakness and suffering, which was an act of unexpected compassion in an otherwise cruel environment.
    - **Symbol of Cross-Bearing:** His action became a powerful symbol of the "cross-bearing" that all followers of Jesus must do (Mat_16:24; Mar_8:34; Luk_9:23). It represents the willingness to accept suffering, sacrifice, and self-denial for the sake of Christ.

    - **Participation in Jesus' Suffering:** By carrying Jesus' cross, Simon unknowingly became part of Jesus' sacrificial death, which paved the way for the victory over sin and death.
    - **Witness to the Gospel:** His involvement in the crucifixion and the possible conversion of his family (as indicated by the mention of his sons in Romans) points to the impact of this event on his life and the spread of the Gospel.
- **Satan's Influence:** There is no direct biblical record of Satan's influence on Simon of Cyrene's life. His compelled participation was a direct result of the Roman authorities' command, which was part of the greater divine plan for Jesus' crucifixion.
    - **God's Sovereignty:** Simon's unexpected role demonstrates God's sovereignty and His ability to use even the accidental or compelled actions of people to fulfil His plan of salvation.
    - **No Deception or Opposition:** Simon's action was an act of obedience to the authorities, and there is no indication that Satan tried to deceive him or undermine his loyalty to God (if he was already a believer).
    - **The Cross as Victory:** The fact that Simon carried the cross, which would become the instrument of Jesus' victory, shows how Satan's attempts to destroy Jesus unknowingly contributed to the establishment of the symbol of Christian victory.

Mary Magdalene and the Women at the Tomb:

- **Who:** Mary Magdalene was a prominent follower of Jesus, from whom Jesus cast out seven demons (Luk_8:2). She was a devoted disciple who followed Jesus until the end of His earthly life. With her were other faithful women, such as Mary, the mother of James and Joseph (Mat_27:56), Salome, the mother of James and John (Mar_15:40), and Joanna, the wife of Chuza (Luk_8:3; Luk_24:10), as well as many other women who ministered to Jesus and His disciples out of their own means. They were present at Jesus' crucifixion and burial, and were the first to go to the tomb on Sunday morning. Their faithfulness and love for Jesus are an example for all Christians.
- **Time and Circumstances:** These women lived in the 1st century AD, during Jesus' ministry in Galilee and Judea, and witnessed His teachings, miracles, and His suffering. They followed Him to the cross and were present when He died (Joh_19:25). After His death, they were deeply grieved, but still respected Jewish burial customs by preparing spices to anoint His body (Luk_23:56). The time after the crucifixion was characterised by:
    - **Sabbath Rest:** Saturday was the Sabbath, a day of rest and worship, during which the women could not work.
    - **Fear and Uncertainty:** The disciples were afraid of the Jewish leaders and kept themselves hidden (Joh_20:19).
    - **Securing the Tomb:** The Jewish leaders, under Satan's influence, sealed the tomb and placed Roman soldiers to guard it (Mat_27:62-66), in an attempt to prevent the resurrection or hide the proof of it.
    - **Hopeful Expectation:** Despite the fear and uncertainty, the women went to the tomb early on Sunday morning to anoint Jesus' body, showing their love and devotion.
- **Her Role in Jesus' Victory:** The women at the tomb played a critical role in salvation history as the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

    - **Discovery of the Empty Tomb:** They were the first people to discover the empty tomb and receive the angels' message of Jesus' resurrection (Mat_28:1-7; Mar_16:1-7; Luk_24:1-7; Joh_20:1-2).
    - **First Messengers:** Jesus Himself appeared to Mary Magdalene and instructed her to bring the good news of His resurrection to the disciples (Joh_20:11-18). They were the first "apostles of the resurrection" and conveyed the message of hope and victory to the grieving disciples.
    - **Devotion and Faith:** Their unwavering devotion and love for Jesus, even in the face of His death and the dangers it entailed, enabled them to be the first witnesses to the greatest event in history.
- **Satan's Influence:** Satan tried to prevent the joy of the resurrection and suppress its message.
    - **Despair and Fear:** Satan tried to keep the women in despair and fear after Jesus' crucifixion, so that they would not seek or find the hope of the resurrection.
    - **Attempt to Secure the Tomb:** The Jewish leaders, under Satan's influence, sealed the tomb and placed soldiers to guard it (Mat_27:62-66), in an attempt to prevent the resurrection or hide the proof of it.
    - **Spreading False Rumours:** After the resurrection, Satan tried to distort the truth by bribing the soldiers to spread a false story that the disciples had stolen Jesus' body (Mat_28:11-15).
    - **Satan's Failure:** Despite all these attempts, God's power opened the tomb and raised Jesus. The women's testimony and the empty tomb thwarted Satan's attempts to deny the resurrection. The resurrection was the final victory over Satan's power over death and sin.

Nicodemus:

- **Who:** Nicodemus was a prominent Jewish leader in the 1st century AD. He was:
    - **A Pharisee:** A member of the Jewish religious group that strictly followed the law.
    - **A Member of the Sanhedrin:** The highest Jewish court in Jerusalem.
    - **A Teacher of Israel:** A respected teacher of the Jewish law and traditions (Joh_3:10).
    - **A Righteous and Devout Man:** Known for his sincerity and devotion to God.
- **Time and Circumstances:** Nicodemus lived during Jesus' earthly ministry in the 1st century AD, a time of intense religious and political tension in Judea under Roman rule. As a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, he was part of the Jewish establishment, which was often skeptical or hostile towards Jesus. His visits to Jesus took place in secret, probably out of fear of the reaction of his fellow leaders (Joh_3:2).
- **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Nicodemus's interactions with Jesus and his later actions show a growing faith and an important, though discreet, role in salvation history.
    - **Secret Visit and Teaching:** Nicodemus secretly visited Jesus to learn more about His teaching (Joh_3:1-21). During this conversation, Jesus taught him the necessity of being born again ("born of water and the Spirit"), which is a core truth of the Gospel.

        - **Defense of Jesus:** He defended Jesus against the Pharisees who wanted to kill Him, by arguing that they could not condemn Him without first hearing Him (Joh_7:50-52). This was a courageous step for someone in his position.
        - **Burial of Jesus:** After Jesus' crucifixion, Nicodemus, along with Joseph of Arimathea, brought a large amount of myrrh and aloes to prepare Jesus' body for burial (Joh_19:38-42). This open act of respect and care showed his faith and devotion, even though it was after Jesus' death.
        - **Symbol of Spiritual Growth:** Nicodemus's journey from initial ignorance and fear to a clear faith and open act of worship (at the burial) symbolises the spiritual growth that every person can experience through the Holy Spirit.
    - **Satan's Influence:** There is no direct biblical record that Satan directly influenced Nicodemus. However, Nicodemus's fear and the secrecy of his visits to Jesus can be seen as a manifestation of the general opposition and pressure that Satan exerted on Jesus' followers through the Jewish religious leaders.
        - **Fear of Human Judgment:** Nicodemus's fear of the Pharisees and the consequences of open association with Jesus (Joh_3:1-2) was an obstacle that Satan could exploit to keep him from the truth.
        - **Satan's Failure:** Despite this fear, Nicodemus ultimately overcame Satan's influence by accepting Jesus' teaching and defending Him, and even burying His body. His actions, although initially cautious, contributed to the preservation of Jesus' body and the fulfilment of prophecies, which thwarted Satan's attempts to destroy Jesus' mission.
- **The Human (Us) as Role Players in the Post-Ascension Period:** After Jesus' ascension, the focus of God's plan of salvation shifted to the role of humanity – individual believers and the universal Church – as co-heirs and co-workers in the spread of the Gospel and the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. We are now the "role players" in this ongoing drama of salvation.
    - **Who:** We, as individual human beings, are created in the image of God (Gen_1:27), but through the Fall, we became alienated from God (Rom_3:23). However, through Jesus Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, we are invited to be reconciled with God and become part of His family (2Co_5:17-20). We are now:
        - **Children of God:** Through faith in Jesus, we are adopted as children of God, with the right to call Him Father (Joh_1:12; Rom_8:14-17).
        - **Temples of the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit lives in us, making our bodies His temple (1Co_6:19-20).
        - **Ambassadors for Christ:** We are God's representatives on earth, with the command to proclaim His message of reconciliation (2Co_5:20).
        - **Members of the Body of Christ (the Church):** We are part of a universal community of believers, with Jesus as the Head (Eph_4:15-16; 1Co_12:27).
    - **Time and Circumstances:** We live in the post-ascension period, also known as the Church Age or the Time of the Gentiles (Rom_11:25). This period extends from Jesus' ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2) until His second coming. It is a time of:

        - **Spiritual Warfare:** We are in a continuous spiritual battle against the forces of darkness (Eph_6:12).
        - **Evangelism and Discipleship:** The primary command of the Church is to carry the Gospel to all nations and make disciples (Mat_28:19-20; Act_1:8).
        - **Expectation of the Second Coming:** We live in the expectation of Jesus' second coming, when He will complete history and establish His eternal Kingdom (Rev_22:20).
    - **Our Role in Jesus' Victory (Conversion and Life of Faith):** Our role in Jesus' victory is to respond to God's grace and to live out and proclaim His plan of salvation.
        - **Conversion (Metanoia) – How it Happens Biblically:** Conversion is a radical change of mind, heart, and direction, away from sin and towards God. It is not merely an emotional reaction, but a profound spiritual transformation.
            - **Recognition of Sin:** The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Joh_16:8). We realise we are sinners and need God's forgiveness (Rom_3:23).
            - **Repentance:** This is a sincere sorrow for our sin and a desire to turn away from it (2Co_7:10).
            - **Faith in Jesus Christ:** We place our trust completely in Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord. This means believing that He died for our sins and rose from the dead (Joh_3:16; Rom_10:9-10).
            - **Change of Life (Fruits of Repentance):** True conversion leads to a visible change in our lifestyle, behaviour, and priorities, guided by the Holy Spirit (Gal_5:22-23; Act_26:20).
            - **Baptism:** As a public confession of faith and a symbol of our new life in Christ (Act_2:38; Rom_6:3-4).
        - **Living out the Victory:** Through conversion, we become part of Jesus' victory. Our role is then to:
            - **Walk in the Spirit:** To live our daily lives under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to overcome sin and live a life that pleases God (Gal_5:16).
            - **Share the Gospel:** To share the good news of salvation with others, so that more people can become part of God's Kingdom (Mat_28:19-20).
            - **Practice Love and Righteousness:** To reflect God's love and righteousness in the world through our actions and attitudes (Joh_13:34-35; Mic_6:8).
            - **Persevere in Faith:** To stand firm in our faith amidst challenges and temptations, knowing that Jesus has already won the victory (Heb_12:1-2).
    - **Satan's Influence in Our Life:** Satan, the "prince of this world" (Joh_14:30), is active in the post-ascension period, and his influence is visible in various ways in our lives and the world around us. He is the "accuser of our brothers" (Rev_12:10) and the "father of lies" (Joh_8:44).
        - **Falsehoods and Lies:** Satan's primary weapon is deception. He plants falsehoods and lies in our minds about God, ourselves, and the world,

to pull us away from the truth (2Co_11:14; 2Th_2:9-10). This can manifest as:
    - **Dispute over God's Character:** He tries to make us doubt God's love, faithfulness, and goodness.
    - **Distortion of Scripture:** He distorts biblical truths to deceive us (Mat_4:6).
    - **False Promises:** He offers false promises of happiness, fulfilment, and freedom outside of God's will.
- **Media and Thoughts:** Satan uses media and cultural narratives to spread his ideas and values that conflict with God's truth (Eph_2:2).
    - **Worldly Ideologies:** He promotes ideologies that encourage self-centeredness, materialism, and moral relativism.
    - **Negative Thoughts:** He sows thoughts of fear, anxiety, despair, jealousy, and unforgiveness in our minds (2Co_10:5).
    - **Temptation to Sin:** He tempts us to various forms of sin, including pride, lust, greed, and anger (Jas_1:14-15; 1Pe_5:8).
- **Sin as Instrument:** Sin is his primary instrument to separate us from God and enslave us. He blinds the minds of unbelievers so that the light of the Gospel does not shine for them (2Co_4:4).
- **Satan's Limited Power:** Although Satan is active, his power is limited and has already been overcome by Jesus Christ on the cross. He is a defeated enemy. We have authority over him through Jesus' Name and the power of the Holy Spirit (Luk_10:19; Jas_4:7).

Summary and Conclusion: Our Victory in Christ

The history of salvation is not just a story of the past; it is a living reality that is still unfolding today, and we are the role players in it! From the eternal councils of God, through creation and the Fall, the covenant promises to the patriarchs, the prophetic announcements of the angels, to the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – every event and every role player had a purpose in God's master plan. The "eye-opener" is that the battle that began in heaven and ended on Golgotha with Jesus' victory, is now continued in our lives. Satan is defeated, but his influence is still real. He tries to deceive us, poison our minds with falsehoods, and lead us to sin. But we are not helpless! The great summary is that Jesus Christ, the Son, achieved the final victory. His blood bought us freedom, His resurrection conquered death, and His ascension secured our place with the Father. The Holy Spirit has been poured out to empower us, and the Church is His body on earth, called to proclaim His message of hope and salvation. The conclusion: We are not merely spectators in this epic story; we are active participants. Through conversion and faith, we are included in Christ's victory. Our calling is to be His light in a dark world, to proclaim His truth amidst lies, and to live out His love amidst hatred. Every time we resist a temptation, expose a lie, or share the Gospel, we are part of Jesus' ongoing triumph. The battle has already been won, and we are on the winning side! Let us therefore, with boldness and zeal, fulfil our role as God's children and Christ's ambassadors, knowing that the King of Kings is with us until the end of the age.

Role Players in Jesus' Life and Salvation History: Part V - From Ascension to the End

This section of the study focuses on the key role players and events that occurred from Jesus' ascension, through the period of the church, until the end of the world as we know it, where Jesus destroys Satan and takes possession of His inheritance.

Key Role Players after Jesus' Ascension and in the End Times:

The Holy Spirit:

- **Who:** The third Person of the Holy Trinity, along with God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. He was sent by Jesus after His ascension to empower, guide, and comfort His followers and lead them into all truth. The Holy Spirit is God Himself dwelling in believers.
    - **God's Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, who was active in creation (Gen_1:2) and who continually works in the lives of believers (Rom_8:9-11).
    - **The Comforter/Advocate:** Jesus promised to send the Comforter (Paraclete) to support and strengthen His disciples after His departure (Joh_14:16; Joh_14:26; Joh_15:26).
    - **The Helper:** The Holy Spirit helps believers to understand God's will, to live in holiness, and to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal_5:22-23).
    - **The One who Convicts:** The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Joh_16:8). He draws people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.
    - **The One who Sanctifies:** The Holy Spirit sanctifies believers, sets them apart for God's service, and gradually transforms them into the image of Christ (2Th_2:13; 1Pe_1:2).
    - **Predicted by Prophets:** The coming and outpouring of the Holy Spirit were already predicted in the Old Testament by prophets (Joe_2:28-29; Eze_36:27). The Holy Spirit played a central role in the life of Jesus (His conception, baptism, ministry) and His disciples, and He continues to work powerfully in the lives of believers today.
- **Time and Circumstances:** The work of the Holy Spirit is not limited to the New Testament but extends throughout all ages:
    - **Old Testament:** The Holy Spirit was already present in the Old Testament, where He equipped people such as kings, prophets, and priests for specific tasks and conveyed God's message (e.g., Jdg_3:10; Num_11:25; 1Sa_10:6).
    - **Jesus' Ministry:** The Holy Spirit was central to Jesus' life – He was conceived by the Spirit (Mat_1:18), He was anointed with the Spirit at His baptism (Mat_3:16-17), and He performed His ministry in the power of the Spirit (Luk_4:14).
    - **Jesus' Ascension and Pentecost:** The Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost, after Jesus' ascension, to empower and equip the disciples for their mission to spread the Gospel (Act_1:8; Act_2:1-4).

        - **Early Church and Expansion:** The Holy Spirit guided and empowered the early church, leading to the rapid growth and expansion of the Gospel across cultures and geographical boundaries (Act_2:42-47; Act_10:1-48).
        - **Time of Persecution:** The Holy Spirit helped believers to remain steadfast during intense persecution and to boldly testify of Jesus (Act_4:31; Act_8:1-4). The Holy Spirit continues to work in the world and in the lives of believers until Jesus' second coming, and He will continue to work until the end of the age.
    - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** The Holy Spirit's role is inextricably linked to Jesus' victory and its application in the lives of people.
        - **Equipping Believers:** The Holy Spirit equips believers with spiritual gifts (1Co_12:4-11), power, wisdom, and courage to do God's will and expand His kingdom.
        - **Conversion and Regeneration:** He convicts people of their sin and leads them to repentance and a new birth in Christ (Joh_3:5-8; Tit_3:5).
        - **Sanctification and Transformation:** The Holy Spirit sanctifies believers, sets them apart for God's service, and gradually transforms them into the image of Christ (Rom_8:13; 2Co_3:18).
        - **Guidance and Revelation:** The Holy Spirit leads believers into all truth, helps them to understand God's Word, and reveals God's will for their lives (Joh_16:13; 1Co_2:10-14).
        - **Power for Witness:** He empowers believers to be powerful witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and salvation (Act_1:8).
        - **Comfort and Consolation:** The Holy Spirit brings comfort, peace, and hope in times of need, sorrow, and trial (Joh_14:26; Rom_15:13).
        - **Unity in the Body of Christ:** He brings believers together in unity and love, binding them to each other as members of Christ's body (Eph_4:3-4). The Holy Spirit is the power behind the spread of the Gospel, the building of the church, and the sanctification of believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Joh_16:8), and testifies of Jesus' victory.
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan constantly tries to oppose and undermine the work of the Holy Spirit.
        - **Hindering and Distorting:** Satan tries to hinder the Holy Spirit's work through spiritual blindness, and distorts His message through false teachings and deception (2Co_4:4; 2Pe_2:1).
        - **Temptation and Suppression:** Satan tries to tempt believers to ignore the Spirit's leading and follow their own sinful desires, leading to sin and apostasy (Gal_5:16-17). He also tries to suppress the Spirit's work, so that believers do not experience the freedom and power of the Spirit (Eph_4:30).
        - **Replacement:** Satan tries to replace the Holy Spirit with his own spirit of deception, leading to spiritual darkness and confusion (1Jn_4:1; 2Th_2:9-10).
        - **God's Victory over Satan's Influence:** The Spirit's power is, however, invincible. Believers can overcome Satan's influence by:
            - **Faith in Jesus Christ:** By believing in Jesus Christ, humanity overcomes Satan's power, for Jesus has already achieved

victory over Satan through His death and resurrection (1Jn_4:4; Col_2:15).
        - **The Holy Spirit's Power:** By receiving the Holy Spirit's power and living in His fullness, humanity can resist and overcome Satan's attacks (Eph_6:10-18; Gal_5:16).
        - **Prayer and Fasting:** Through persistent prayer and fasting, humanity can overcome Satan's influence and experience the Holy Spirit's power (Mat_17:21; Eph_6:18).
        - **The Word of God:** By reading, memorising, and obeying the Word of God, humanity can overcome Satan's lies and know the truth of God (Psa_119:105; Eph_6:17; Mat_4:1-11).
        - **The Community of Believers:** By being part of the community of believers, humanity can resist Satan's attacks and receive the love and support of other believers (Gal_6:2; Heb_10:24-25).
        - **Repentance and Reconciliation:** By making true repentance and reconciliation with God, humanity can overcome Satan's power and receive the freedom of God's children (1Jn_1:9; Rom_8:1-2).
    - **The Holy Spirit's Knowledge of Satan:** The Holy Spirit knows Satan and his strategies completely:
        - **Satan's Name and Nature:** The Holy Spirit knows Satan's name ("enemy," "accuser") and his nature as the adversary of God and His children (1Pe_5:8; Rev_12:10).
        - **Satan's Tactics:** The Holy Spirit reveals Satan's tactics to tempt believers with lies, fear, doubt, and deception (2Co_2:11; 1Ti_4:1).
        - **Satan's Goal:** The Holy Spirit knows Satan's ultimate goal to thwart God's plans, destroy His kingdom, and deceive and destroy His children (Rev_12:9).
    - **The Holy Spirit knows Satan's Weakness:**
        - **God's Sovereign Power:** Satan is subordinate to God's sovereign power and can do nothing without God's permission (Job_1:12; Psa_103:19).
        - **The Holy Spirit's Victory:** The Holy Spirit is more powerful than Satan and can overcome and bind him (Mat_12:28-29).
        - **The Word of God:** Satan is powerless against the Word of God, which can overcome and destroy him (Heb_4:12; Eph_6:17).
        - **The Blood of Jesus:** Satan is finally overcome by the blood of Jesus, which brings forgiveness and freedom from sin (Rev_12:11; Col_2:15).
        - **The Faith of Believers:** Satan is weaker than the faith of believers, who can resist and overcome him (1Pe_5:9; Jas_4:7).
- **The Apostles (including Matthew, Luke, Mark, John, Paul, Peter):**
    - **Who:** The Apostles were the men Jesus chose and trained (the twelve), as well as others who were later called directly by Him (such as Paul). They were eyewitnesses to His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. They all played a crucial role in the establishment and early spread of the Christian Gospel.

        - **Matthew:** One of Jesus' twelve apostles. Formerly a tax collector, he wrote the Gospel according to Matthew, which is often addressed to a Jewish audience and emphasizes Jesus as the Messiah-King.
        - **Luke:** Co-worker of Paul and the author of the Gospel according to Luke and the book of Acts of the Apostles. He was a physician by profession and his writings are known for their accuracy and focus on Jesus' humanity and His universal message of salvation, often addressed to a Greek (non-Jewish) audience.
        - **Mark:** Son of Mary, an early Christian woman in Jerusalem. He was a co-worker of Paul and Peter. He wrote the Gospel according to Mark, which is often considered the first Gospel and portrays Jesus as the servant of God, possibly with a Roman audience in mind.
        - **John:** One of Jesus' twelve apostles and known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He wrote the Gospel according to John, three letters (1, 2, 3 John), and the prophetic book of Revelation. His Gospel focuses on Jesus' divinity and His relationship with the Father.
        - **Paul:** Formerly a zealous persecutor of Christians, named Saul. He was dramatically converted by the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. He became one of the most important missionaries of the early Christian church and is the author of 13 letters in the New Testament, which profoundly shaped the theology of Christianity.
        - **Peter:** One of Jesus' twelve apostles, formerly named Simon. He was a fisherman by profession and played a leadership role in the early Christian church in Jerusalem. He is the author of two letters in the New Testament (1 and 2 Peter).
    - **Time and Circumstances:** The apostles experienced Jesus' earthly ministry (approximately 27-30 AD) firsthand as His closest followers and disciples. They witnessed His teachings, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension.
        - **After Jesus' Ascension:** From Pentecost (approximately 30 AD), they received the command and empowerment of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Act_1:8).
        - **Early Church:** They founded and led the early Christian church in Jerusalem and spread the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire amidst intense persecution and the rapid growth of the church.
        - **Key Events:** They were present at and/or witnessed:
            - Jesus' baptism and temptation (Matthew 3-4; Mark 1; Luke 3-4).
            - Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7; Luke 6).
            - Jesus' miracles and healings (Matthew 8-9; Mark 1-2; Luke 4-5).
            - Jesus' Last Supper and prayer in Gethsemane (Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22).
            - Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension (Matthew 27-28; Mark 15-16; Luke 23-24; John 19-21).
    - **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** The Apostles' role was fundamental for the continuation of Jesus' mission and the establishment of the early church.
        - **Witnesses of Jesus' Life and Teaching:** They were eyewitnesses to Jesus' life, teachings, death, resurrection, and ascension, which made them credible and authoritative witnesses (Act_1:21-22; Act_2:32).

        - **Foundation of the Church:** They laid the foundation of the church by proclaiming the Gospel, making disciples, and writing the New Testament scriptures. Their testimony and teachings are the basis of our faith (Eph_2:20).
        - **Spread of the Gospel:** They powerfully spread the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire, leading to the establishment of new churches and the conversion of many people (Act_2:41-47; Act_8:1-8; Act_11:19-26).
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan constantly tried to undermine the Apostles and thereby thwart Jesus' mission.
        - **Attempted Deception:** Satan tried to deceive and tempt them, as during Jesus' temptation in the wilderness (Mat_4:1-11; Mar_1:12-13; Luk_4:1-13), where Jesus resisted him with the Word of God.
        - **Fear and Doubt:** Satan planted fear and doubt in their hearts, especially during Jesus' arrest, crucifixion, and the time before His resurrection, which led to their flight and Peter's denial (Mat_26:56; Mat_26:69-75; Mar_14:66-72; Luk_22:54-62).
        - **Temptation of Judas:** Satan directly tempted Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus (Luk_22:3-6; Joh_13:2; Joh_13:27).
        - **Attack on Peter:** Jesus told Peter that Satan desired to sift him like wheat (Luk_22:31-34), indicating Satan's goal to destroy his faith.
        - **Satan's Failure:** Despite their failures and Satan's attacks, Jesus restored them and equipped them with the Holy Spirit. Satan's attempts were ultimately unsuccessful, for the apostles saw Jesus' resurrection and, empowered by the Holy Spirit, spread the Gospel worldwide. They remained faithful and the Gospel spread, proving that God's plan would prevail through them.
- **The Church/Believers:**
    - **Who:** The universal body of Christ, consisting of all true believers from Pentecost until Jesus' second coming. The true church of God, led by the Holy Spirit, is:
        - **The Body of Christ:** Where He is the Head and the Holy Spirit gives life (Eph_1:22-23; Col_1:18).
        - **The Assembly of Believers:** Where people come together to worship God, obey His Word, and serve one another in love (Act_2:42-47).
        - **The Temple of the Holy Spirit:** Where He dwells and works in the lives of individual believers and the collective body (1Co_3:16-17; 1Co_6:19).
        - **The Bride of Christ:** Where He loves her, cares for her, and prepares her for His second coming (Eph_5:25-27; Rev_21:9-10).
        - **The Unity of Believers:** Where people come together in love and unity, reflecting the unity of the Trinity (Joh_17:20-23; Eph_4:3-6). The Holy Spirit guides the true church through:
            - Inspiration of the Word of God.
            - Guidance in prayer.
            - Power for service and witness of Jesus Christ.
            - Unity among believers.
    - **Time and Circumstances:** The Church lives in the "in-between time" between Jesus' first and second coming, in a world that is still under the

influence of sin. They are called to continue Jesus' mission. The church survives and flourishes under various challenging circumstances:

- **Time of Persecution:** Believers are persecuted for their faith in Jesus Christ (Act_8:1-4; 2Ti_3:12).
- **Time of War and Conflict:** Believers must remain steadfast in their faith amidst violence and uncertainty (Rev_12:11; 2Ti_2:3-4).
- **Time of Economic Crisis:** Believers must trust in God's provision and not in earthly riches (Mat_6:25-34; Php_4:19).
- **Time of Moral Decay:** Believers must stand firm for God's unchanging truth and not succumb to the pressure of a world that constantly changes its standards (Rom_12:2; 2Ti_3:1-5). God's definition of sin remains constant, regardless of the changing norms of society.
- **Time of Spiritual Darkness:** Believers must seek the light of God's Word and the Holy Spirit's guidance (Joh_1:4-5; Eph_5:8-11).
- **Time of Change and Uncertainty:** The Church lives in a dynamic world, but Jesus Christ remains the same, yesterday and today and forever (Heb_13:8; Jas_1:2-4).
- **Natural Disasters and Diseases:** The Church offers hope and service amidst such trials, trusting in God's sovereignty.

- **Its Role in Jesus' Victory:** The church's role is to proclaim, spread, and celebrate Jesus' victory. The Church is Jesus' hands and feet on earth, proclaiming His love, truth, and salvation. Through the proclamation of the Gospel and the living out of God's love, the Church demonstrates the continued victory of Christ.
  - **Witness to Jesus' Love and Salvation:** The church testifies of Jesus' love and salvation to the world (Joh_15:27; Act_1:8).
  - **Spread of the Gospel:** The church spreads the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations, fulfilling the Great Commission (Mat_28:19-20; Mar_16:15).
  - **Support of Jesus' Ministry:** The church supports Jesus' continued ministry through prayer, love, and service to one another and the world (Luk_8:1-3; Gal_6:10).
  - **Resistance to Satan's Attacks:** The church resists Satan's attacks and overcomes him through the power of Jesus Christ and the Word of God (Eph_6:10-18; Rev_12:11).
  - **Preparation for Jesus' Return:** The church prepares for Jesus' second coming through sanctification, faithfulness, and watchfulness (1Th_4:13-18; Rev_22:12).
  - **Participation in Jesus' Victory:** The church shares in Jesus' victory over sin, death, and the devil, and will reign with Him (Rev_12:11; Rom_8:37-39). The fulfilment of prophecies related to the church and Jesus' victory:
    - **The church as light for the nations:** The church proclaims Jesus' light to all nations. (Isa_2:2-4)
    - **New Covenant:** Jesus establishes a new covenant with His church through His blood. (Jer_31:31-34)
    - **Unity of the church:** Jesus unites His church into one body. (Eze_37:21-28)

        - **Outpouring of the Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is poured out on the church. (Joe_2:28-32)
        - **Jesus' Return:** Jesus will return to redeem His church and be king over the whole earth. (Zec_14:9)
        - **Preparation for Jesus' Return:** The church prepares for Jesus' return through sanctification and cleansing. (Mal_3:1-4)
        - **Proclamation of the Gospel:** The Gospel is proclaimed to all nations before Jesus' return. (Mat_24:14)
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan constantly tries to undermine the church and thwart God's plan.
        - **Temptation to Sin and Apostasy:** Satan tempts church members to sin and tries to make them fall away from the faith (1Pe_5:8; 2Th_2:3; 1Ti_4:1).
        - **Division and Conflict:** Satan sows division and conflict in the church to weaken its unity and witness (1Co_3:3; Gal_5:15).
        - **False Teachings:** Satan spreads false teachings and doctrines to distort the truth of the Gospel and deceive believers (2Pe_2:1; 2Co_11:13-15).
        - **Spiritual Darkness and Confusion:** Satan tries to bring spiritual darkness and confusion into the church to hide the light of God's truth (2Co_4:4).
        - **Persecution and Martyrdom:** Satan inspires persecution and martyrdom against the church in an attempt to destroy it (Rev_2:10; Rev_12:13).
        - **Influencing Leaders:** Satan tries to influence church leaders and preachers to deviate from the truth or even become his agents (2Co_11:13-15; Gal_1:6-9). Despite Satan's attacks, Jesus, however, promised that the gates of hell would not overcome the Church (Mat_16:18). The Church, led by the Holy Spirit and equipped with God's Word, will stand firm and continue to proclaim Jesus' victory until His second coming.
- **The Four Living Creatures (Rev_4:6-8):**
    - **Who:** Heavenly beings surrounding God's throne, full of eyes in front and behind, with the likenesses of a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle (Rev_4:6-8; Eze_1:5-14). They represent all creation in worship. In Christian tradition, they are also commonly seen as symbols of the four Gospels and the different aspects of Jesus Christ revealed therein:
        - **The Lion:** Symbolises Jesus' royal power and dominion, often associated with the Gospel of Mark.
        - **The Ox/Calf:** Symbolises Jesus' service, humility, and sacrifice as the true offering, often associated with the Gospel of Luke.
        - **The Man:** Symbolises Jesus' full humanity and His wisdom, often associated with the Gospel of Matthew.
        - **The Eagle:** Symbolises Jesus' divine nature, power, and heavenly insight, often associated with the Gospel of John.
    - **Time and Circumstances:** The visions of the four living creatures were revealed in both the Old and New Testaments, and their presence is permanent in the heavenly throne room.
        - **Ezekiel's Vision (around 593 BC):** Ezekiel received a vision of God's throne and the four living creatures while the Jews were in Babylonian

exile (Eze_1:5-14; Eze_10:1-22). This vision emphasised God's sovereignty and presence amidst their exile.
        - **Revelation of John (around 95 AD):** John received a similar vision of God's throne and the four living creatures during the Roman persecution of Christians (Rev_4:6-8; Rev_5:8-14).
        - **Circumstances:** Both visions occurred during times of great uncertainty and trial for God's people, where the living creatures represented God's power, dominion, and presence. They are permanently in the heavenly throne room and continually worship God, and are central to John's visions of the end times.
    - **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** They continually proclaim God's holiness and power, and lead the heavenly worship of God and the Lamb. Their presence in the heavenly throne room confirms God's sovereignty and Jesus' worthiness to open the scrolls.
        - **Worship and Praise:** They worship and praise God and Jesus as the Lamb who is worthy to open the scroll (Rev_4:8-11; Rev_5:8-14).
        - **Proclaiming God's Holiness:** They continually cry out: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Rev_4:8), emphasising God's unchanging holiness and sovereignty.
        - **Execution of God's Judgment:** They are also involved in the execution of God's judgments, such as when they give the seven bowls of God's wrath to the angels (Rev_15:7).
        - **Representation of Creation:** They represent all creation in worship and testify of God's dominion over all that He has made.
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan has no direct influence or power over the four living creatures, as they are directly in God's presence and continually proclaim His holiness and sovereignty.
        - **Contrast with Satan's Rebellion:** Their uninterrupted worship is a direct contrast to Satan's original rebellion and his attempt to gain worship for himself. They testify of God's undisputed dominion.
        - **Unwavering Loyalty:** Satan cannot undermine their loyalty or deceive them, for they are completely devoted to God and His throne.

- ## The Twenty-Four Elders **(Revelation 4:4):**
    - **Who:** The Twenty-Four Elders are an important part of the heavenly worship and praise of God in the book of Revelation. They are heavenly figures seated on thrones around God's throne, clothed in white robes with golden crowns (Rev_4:4). They likely represent the redeemed people of God, a combination of Old Testament saints and the Church.
        - **Identity and Number:** There are 24 elders. The number 24 is commonly interpreted as symbolic of the completeness of God's redeemed people, possibly through the combination of the 12 tribes of Israel (Old Testament) and the 12 apostles of Jesus (New Testament), together representing the unity of God's people throughout all ages (Rev_21:12-14).
        - **Role:** Their role is to worship, praise, and serve God in His presence (Rev_4:10; Rev_5:8).
        - **Attire:** They wear white robes and golden crowns, which are symbols of their righteousness, holiness, and royal status as co-heirs with Christ (Rev_4:4; 1Pe_2:9).

        - **Representation:** They represent all redeemed humanity, Jew and Gentile, who have been redeemed through Jesus Christ and are now in God's presence (Rev_5:9-10).
    - **Time and Circumstances:** They are permanently present in the heavenly throne room and continually worship God. They are central to John's visions of the end times as recorded in the book of Revelation.
        - **Time of Revelation:** They are mentioned in the book of Revelation, which was written during the Roman persecution of Christians (around 95 A.D.).
        - **Heavenly Presence:** They sit before God's throne in heaven (Rev_4:4), indicating their position of closeness and honor.
        - **Context of Visions:** The visions of the Twenty-Four Elders in Revelation were given during a time of great persecution and uncertainty for the early Christian church. Their presence and worship serve as a hopeful vision and promise of heavenly reality and ultimate victory for believers.
        - **Involvement in God's Plan:** They are actively present during the unfolding of God's judgment and salvation plan in the end times.
    - **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** The Twenty-Four Elders play an important role in the celebration and proclamation of Jesus' victory.
        - **Worship and Praise:** They worship and praise God and Jesus as the Lamb who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals (Rev_5:8-14; Rev_4:10-11). They cast their crowns before the throne in recognition of God's sovereignty and Jesus' worthiness.
        - **Presentation of Prayers:** They offer the prayers of the saints to God in golden bowls full of incense (Rev_5:8), emphasizing their role as intercessors or representatives of the redeemed people.
        - **Proclamation of Jesus' Salvation:** They sing a new song and proclaim Jesus' salvation and His kingdom, which has purchased people from every tribe, language, people, and nation for God (Rev_5:9-10).
        - **Participation in God's Plan:** They are actively involved in the heavenly events leading to Jesus' final victory and the establishment of His eternal kingdom.
    - **Satan's Influence:** Satan has no power or influence over the Twenty-Four Elders. Their redeemed and glorified status in heaven is the ultimate proof of Satan's defeat over those he tried to destroy.
        - **Beyond Deception:** They are directly in God's presence and are completely devoted to Him, which makes them immune to Satan's deception and lies.
        - **Unwavering Loyalty:** Satan cannot undermine their loyalty or cause them to act against God.
        - **Witnesses to Satan's Defeat:** Their presence in the heavenly throne room, clothed in white and with crowns, is a constant reminder of the victory Jesus achieved over sin, death, and Satan's power.
- **The Antichrist and the False Prophet:**
    - **Who:** Key antagonists who will appear in the last days as instruments of Satan.
        - **The Antichrist:** He is a human figure empowered and inspired by Satan to oppose Christ and His teaching (1Jn_2:18; 1Jn_2:22;

2Th_2:9). His purpose is to deceive and entice the world to reject Christ and demand his own worship. He will present himself as God and perform miracles and signs to deceive people (2Th_2:4; 2Th_2:9; Rev_13:3-4).
        - **The False Prophet:** He is the second beast mentioned in Revelation 13, who rises out of the earth (Rev_13:11). He serves as the false prophet of the Antichrist, proclaiming the Antichrist's message and enticing people to follow and worship him. He will perform miracles and signs to deceive people, including forcing people to worship the image of the beast (Antichrist) and receive a mark (Rev_13:12-17). He will also make false prophecies and present himself as a true prophet (Deu_13:1-5; Mat_7:15; 2Pe_2:1). He works directly with the Antichrist to deceive humanity.
    - **Time and Circumstances:** They will appear in the period just before Jesus' second coming, specifically during the Great Tribulation (Mat_24:21; Rev_7:14). Their appearance will be characterized by unprecedented deception and oppression, where they will try to deceive humanity to reject God and worship themselves.
    - **Their Role in Jesus' Victory:** The Antichrist and the False Prophet are part of Satan's last, desperate attempt to thwart God's plan and deceive humanity. Their appearance fulfills biblical prophecies about the end times and serves as a final test for believers.
        - **Adversaries of Christ:** They are the chief adversaries of Jesus Christ and His teaching (1Jn_2:18; 1Jn_2:22).
        - **Attempted Victory:** They will try to thwart Jesus' victory and entice the world to follow and worship them.
        - **Final Defeat:** However, they will ultimately be defeated and destroyed by Jesus Christ Himself at His second coming (Rev_19:11-21). The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be the first to be cast into the lake of fire (Rev_19:20). Their destruction is powerful proof of Jesus' absolute and final victory.
    - **Satan's Influence:** They are the direct embodiment of Satan's hatred, rebellion, and deception. Satan will use them to establish his kingdom on earth and try to usurp the worship due to God for himself.
        - **Full Empowerment:** Satan has full control over both the Antichrist and the False Prophet and gives them his power and authority (2Th_2:9; Rev_13:2).
        - **Inspiration of Evil:** Satan inspires them to do evil, spread lies, and deceive people (Joh_8:44; 2Co_11:14).
        - **Used as Instruments:** Satan uses them as his primary instruments in the end times to thwart God's plans and destroy humanity (Rev_12:9; Rev_20:10).
        - **Ultimate Destruction:** Satan will be cast into the lake of fire and sulfur with them, indicating his final and eternal defeat (Rev_20:10). Their existence and ultimate destruction serve as proof of God's sovereignty and His inevitable victory over all evil forces.

Satan's Ultimate Defeat and Christ's Final Triumph:

- **Satan's Ultimate Defeat:**

    - **Who:** Satan, also known as the devil, the ancient serpent, the accuser of the brothers, and the father of lies (Rev_12:9-10; Joh_8:44). He is the arch-adversary of God and His plan of salvation.
    - **Time and Circumstances:** Satan's final judgment and destruction occur at the end of the millennium, after the final rebellion of the nations deceived by him (Rev_20:7-9).
    - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** Satan's ultimate and eternal defeat is the final and undeniable proof of Jesus Christ's complete victory over sin, death, and all the forces of darkness. It is the complete fulfillment of God's original promise in Gen_3:15, where the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head.
    - **Satan's Influence:** After the millennium, Satan will be released for a short time to deceive the nations for a final rebellion against God's people. However, this last, desperate attempt at deception will be immediately destroyed by God's fire from heaven. Satan will then be cast forever into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast (Antichrist) and the false prophet already are (Rev_20:10).
- **Christ's Final Triumph and Taking Possession:**
    - **Who:** Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev_19:16). He is the One who achieved victory through His death and resurrection, and who has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mat_28:18).
    - **Time and Circumstances:** Christ's final triumph unfolds in several phases after His ascension:
        - **Second Coming:** He will return in glory to destroy the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Rev_19:11-21; Rev_20:4-6).
        - **The Great White Throne Judgment:** After the millennium and Satan's final destruction, Jesus will judge the living and the dead (Rev_20:11-15).
        - **New Heaven and New Earth:** Thereafter, He will create a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells and where there will be no more sin, death, or sorrow (Rev_21:1-4).
    - **His Role in Jesus' Victory:** This is the culmination and complete fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. Jesus destroys Satan and all evil forces, judges the world in righteousness, and takes possession of His inheritance (the redeemed humanity and the new creation). He establishes His eternal kingdom where He will reign forever with His redeemed people, and God will dwell with His people (Rev_21:3; Rev_22:3-5). All things will be subjected to Him, and God will be all in all (1Co_15:24-28).

END